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A GOLDEN HEART.

A Novel.

BY

TOM HOOD.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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CHAPTER I.

THE RETURN OF THE HEIR OF LACQUOIGNE.

HENRY VORIAN was heartily sick of campaigning—and small wonder, for he had seen but little of it, and that only the disagreeable part. The glitter and enthusiasm of warfare were wanting to his experience of the Crimean expedition. The dull monotony of the siege, and the weary watching in the trenches, had been very tiresome; but when he exchanged them it was for a far worse tedium and languor—the irksome humdrum life of the hospital.

When he was ordered home on sick leave, he was as pleased as a boy going home for the holidays. It was a dreary place that

paternal mansion in Hertford Street, and there was no over-abundance of affection there to light it up: even the grandeur was but a twopenny sort of grandeur—poverty in purple; but, compared with the four white blank walls in his little room in the hospital, for the first time in his life, home really seemed like home to him.

The transport at last steamed out of the Golden Horn, and turned its head towards the old country. Henry Vorian hobbled about the deck in high glee. Every revolution of the paddles that churned the blue wave to foam was taking him nearer home, and farther from that hateful place. In vain did Constantinople look her loveliest, crowned with domes and minarets—in vain did the still waters give back the image of the Eastern fairy city—in vain did gaudy caiques, gliding about among the fleet, lend colour and motion to the picture! Henry Vorian hated the place and everything connected with it. He shook the only fist he possessed in the direction of the hospital, vowing that he had never been so miserable in his life as he was when he was cooped up in dreary inaction in the hospital ward.

"I'll tell you what, Vo," said a brother officer, who was returning to England minus a leg, "you would find a residence in Cursitor Street quite as wearisome, if it ever were your luck to get into the hands of some amiable Israelite."

"I suppose I should," said the heir of Lacquoigne; and his glee died out rather suddenly, and his countenance became very grave. He had forgotten about debts and duns latterly, and his friend's remark reminded him that he was returning to a country where there were many tradespeople who would feel a great interest in his recovery. They no doubt had looked over the lists of killed and missing with considerable anxiety, to learn whether Captain the Hon. H. Vorian had paid about the only debt that he would find no great difficulty in settling —the debt of Nature. He pictured to himself the dismay of his creditors when they read the account of the battle of Inkermann, and learned that Captain the Hon. Henry Vorian, of the 5th Battalion Scots Fusilier Guards, was seriously wounded. With what concern they would read that amputation would probably be necessary, and how fervently they would long to hear how the

patient bore the operation, and whether he was improving or no.

It is terribly unromantic this, no doubt; but then you see it is true, nevertheless. When men in England were reading, with flushed faces, the story of that splendid charge of the Light Brigade—were ready to cheer over the breakfast-table, and wave their *Times* in frantic enthusiasm, as they learned how the gallant brigade rode straight through the hail of shot and shell roaring upon them from all quarters—were ready to cry with pride and grief when they were told how few of the noble fellows came back alive from that avalanche of death, there were such things as tailors, say, who, when they found that of a certain regiment, that went into action so many strong, only about a third, scarcely a quarter, came back alive, went to their shelves, and taking down their books, looked to see how many customers they had in that regiment, and how many of them had accounts standing against them unsettled.

Harry Vorian was quite aware of this. He knew the interest with which he was regarded by his creditors. He was, in fact, a joint-stock speculation of theirs, and, I regret

to say, some of the shareholders in him were desirous of realising, and so getting out of the "adventure;" which was awkward for him. Fancy the heir to a barony being nothing more or less than an advertising medium. If Sir Richard Mayne had taken it into his head at this time to put down unoffending boardmen, an acute myrmidon of his might fairly have taken our captain into custody. For what was he doing but puffing the commodities of his creditors? He was always with the first lot in the pursuit of fashion, and he was admirably dressed, well gloved, and neatly booted, with a faultless beaver. And the tradesmen who turned him out in this style got their profit out of it, for the friends of so faultless a swell were sure to inquire with whom he dealt. As he sauntered in Bond Street, or lounged in the Row, he was, in point of fact, earning his clothes, and might just as well have carried a board at once, with "Try Snippem's coats. Baggs is the right tailor for trousers. Observe Shears's vests. Carstair's guinea hats are best. Go to I. Beck's for kid gloves," and many more such puffing phrases.

But, unluckily, in one or two instances a tradesman would discover that at times the

brother officers whom the aristocratic boardman sent him were no better off than himself, and bad debts were the consequence. Then the confiding creditor would get a little savage on occasion, and the captain's quarters became uncomfortably warm for him, owing to the number of little notes that came in requesting the settlement of "little accounts" of considerable magnitude.

As Henry Vorian began to recall the number of his creditors and the amount of their claims, the prospect before him lost a good deal of its *couleur de rose*. I am not sure whether, if it had been in his power to do so, he would not have ordered the nose of the snorting transport to be turned towards Scutari. He might have put up with the everlasting dulness of his hospital room rather than return to his snug quarters in town, which would probably be a little too lively, thanks to the attentions of frequent callers with unpaid bills in their hands.

However, there was nothing to be done but to submit to fate and the homeward course of the puffing old transport, "The Lady of the Lake." But somehow poor Vorian's cheerfulness was damped, and he did not limp about the deck in quite so

sportive a manner as at first. He did not seem so anxious to see the white cliffs he had been spouting about at the commencement of the voyage, and he grumbled about the bayonet wound in his leg, and growled over the lost arm.

But just as his desire for England could not lend wings to the unwieldy "Lady of the Lake," so now his wish to retard her course did not check her career, and delay one turn of her paddles, or one curtesy of her engines, which bobbed their heads up and down under a skylight, as if they were taking lessons in deportment.

At last the white cliffs hove in sight, and before long Captain the Honourable Henry Vorian, 5th Battalion Scots Fusilier Guards, was put ashore with his baggage in the land of his birth—and his debt.

He was met by his father and two brothers in the carriage, and a warm greeting it was; for the old peer, I believe, really liked his son, and was proud of him, feeling, perhaps, too, that he was, as it were, restored to him from the dead. The boys, I have already said, were very fond of him.

So the dreary old chariot picked him up, the baggage was mounted on a cab, with one

of my lord's footmen to look after it, and away they rattled to Hertford Street, where my lady was sitting in state to receive her son, and gave him the cold, wrinkled cheek on the left hand side of her very aristocratic nose to kiss, and made him a little speech that might have been put into Greek, and attributed to a Spartan mother.

The girls received him with great delight. The second girl, who was not very fond of her dancing lessons, said, gravely, that she thought it would be very nice for Henry not to be obliged to waltz now his arm was gone. And then the boys were curious to know whether he could go through the broadsword exercise with his left arm, and how he could manage to hold the reins, and whether being wounded was rather painful or otherwise, and what was having your arm cut off like, with a host of similar questions.

By-and-by the children were sent up to their governess, and my lord, my lady, and the captain sat down to a very modest lunch —some cold shoulder of mutton and a glass or two of Marsala.

Such was the reception of the returned heir, and such the feast prepared in his

honour. It was not very exhilirating; nor did the cheerfulness increase excessively when my lady, after lunch, invited her son into the boudoir, and then and there drew his attention to some bills which had been sent in while he was away.

"I really cannot undertake to pay bills for you now, Henry," said my lady, putting up her chin with a half-offended air, and looking at him steadily along her aquiline nose. "You have your pay and your allowance, and you must make them do; and I must say that I think you should not permit me to be annoyed with your bills. Why do you have them sent here? There are plenty as it is!"

"How could I help the beggars sending 'em in?" said the captain; "I suppose they thought I was a gone coon, and that they would have to come on the governor for my debts."

"I should advise my lord to decline to have anything to do with them—let there be no mistake about that, Henry," said this fond mother. "I wish, too, you would not indulge in your barrack-room language here. It's a very bad example for the children, and I am sure most unbecoming in the heir to a

title like ours. But then you know, Henry, you never had any proper pride or refinement. I don't know where you have got your disposition—not from my family, I'm sure!"

"There, for goodness sake, mother, don't begin to lecture me the moment I get home. And as for the language—the barrack-room language, as you are kind enough to call it—I don't think there's any great harm in it, provided you don't swear. All the fellows talk slang; why, hang it all, I've heard girls do it—swells too—the Somerleigh and Graveston girls, for instance."

"You need not remind me of the disgraceful decline of manners in these vulgar days. Young men now are little better than bears, and the girls are something terrible. In my time, well-born youth was distinguished by a repose and grace which the present generation seems to be incapable of."

"And a very nice pleasant sort of people to have to do with, your 'repose and grace' youth must have been. Starch and pipe-clay—very good things in their way, but a terrible nuisance anywhere, except in linen and cross-belts."

"No want of taste in you, Henry, can surprise me. After the amazement I have felt to think I could have such a son, I have no wonder left to bestow on the details of your sad degeneracy!"

"Thank you, mother; I suppose you won't forbid my associating with the children; I promise you I won't corrupt their morals, or do anything to injure the lessons of 'repose and grace.' And if you'll allow me, I think I shall be rather more jolly in their company than here."

So Henry Vorian limped out of his mother's boudoir, and stumped upstairs to the children's room.

"I beg your pardon," he exclaimed, as he opened the door and found Alice seated at the window, with the children round her; "I was not aware that the little folk had a visitor."

"I am not a visitor, sir; I am their governess."

"The deuce you are; I beg your pardon, I really have been in uncivilised parts until I have almost forgotten the usages of society. But I am surprised at not having heard that the youngsters had a governess. I'm Henry Vorian, my lord's eldest son, and

a very unfortunate party, Miss——There, I declare I must ask you to tell me your name."

"My name is Alice Carlyle."

"And mine Henry Vorian, as I have already mentioned. So I hope we shall be good friends, after so ceremonious an introduction."

Alice laughed. She felt quite at her ease at once. There was something so frank and unpretending in his manner.

"I must ask you," he continued, "to give me the *entrée* of the school-room, Miss Carlyle, for I'm a damaged old soldier, and they don't want me anywhere downstairs. And between you and me, I don't care much about society. Besides, what is a one-armed old pensioner to do at balls and dinners? He hasn't got an arm to give when required; and, as you see, my hobble is not very graceful yet. I don't know what it may be when I have practised it for a few years."

"I hope the injury is not so serious as you think."

"Well, no! To tell the truth, my doctor says I shall be all right as far as the wound in the leg goes; I only want quiet and good living."

"I say, Henry," chimed in one of the boys, "what do you think Harriet says?"

"Haven't a notion, young 'un."

"Why she wants to know whether your arm won't grow again."

"I haven't any intention of growing another arm just at present, Mademoiselle Harriet; but perhaps I should be grateful for the receipt for encouraging the growth if necessary. Is it Macassar oil?"

"Don't be foolish, sir," says the little lady; "I dare say you might grow another. I read in my natural history, the other day, that when a lobster loses its claw, another grows in its place; and if a lobster can do that, I suppose you can."

"Oh, of course I can. But then, you see, as I haven't lost a claw, I don't want to grow another."

"No, not a claw, but then an arm is very much the same. I should try, if I were you."

"I'll think about it, and then let you know."

"You bear your misfortune very good-temperedly," said Alice.

"Well, when you must bear a thing, it is just as well to grin and do it."

At this moment the children's tea was brought in, and they sat down to it, Alice presiding.

"May I have tea, too?" asked Henry.

"Oh, certainly; we shall be very happy—shall we not, Harriet?"

"If he behaves himself properly," says the little lady.

"Oh, I'll be the best of boys, Harriet."

The tea passed very pleasantly, and Henry Vorian was capital company. At the request of his brothers he described the battle, which, to their surprise, he did very differently from the newspapers. He sent down for his dressing-case presently, and took out a little box of odds and ends which he had brought away as relics from the Crimea. These he divided among the children, giving the boys bullets picked up on the battle-field, and giving the girls little trinkets and buttons taken from the dead Russians. As he was closing the box, Harriet picked out a little platinum locket.

"What are you going to do with that, Henry?"

"Give it to Miss Carlyle, if she cares to have a relic."

"I shall value it very much indeed. How

very pretty it is; I really don't like to deprive you of it."

"Oh, you won't deprive me at all. I have a lot of things of the same sort I bought of a Zouave in the hospital."

"Thank you; I shall value it very much."

"I shall have a hole bored in my bullet, and make it a charm for my watch-chain, when I have one," said one of the boys.

"I shall have a pin put to this button," said Harriet, "and make a brooch of it. What shall you do with yours, Miss Carlyle?"

"I think I will wear it on my watch-guard," said Alice.

She took off the guard, which was made of her mother's hair, and tried to attach the locket. The ring was a little too large, however, and she had some difficulty with it."

"Let me help you," said Henry Vorian; and the next minute both their heads were bent over the obdurate ring, Alice's soft curls almost touching Henry's cheek, and their fingers meeting every now and then by chance.

There is nothing more dangerous for a susceptible youth than such a delicate employment as this. Henry Vorian had seen little of female society in the Crimea—hospital

nurses and camp-followers. And now here he was engaged in the difficult task of putting a locket on a split-ring, that would not open, for a young lady of most prepossessing appearance. The position was trying, and he became so nervous that he fumbled and dropped the locket, and had to give up the attempt in despair, leaving Alice to manage it with a pair of scissors.

No wonder that as he went downstairs to his own room to dress for dinner, he said to himself, "Egad, that's an uncommonly pretty girl!"

And what did Alice say?

"What a very pleasant, agreeable fellow!"

I wonder what my lady would have said as she sat in her chilly boudoir if she had discovered where and how the heir of the house of Lacquoigne had spent his afternoon? The aristocratic chopper of a nose would have put on a keener edge, and the sharp gray eyes would have kindled. For it was tacitly agreed on in the family that Henry was just the sort of man to be admired by Miss Orr. And Miss Orr was a most desirable match; and the whole arrangement was so easy and so convenient, that it must be carried out.

Mr. and Mrs. and Miss Orr dined with my lord that evening. But as Captain the Honourable Henry Vorian, 5th Battalion Scotch Fusilier Guards, was taking Miss Alicia Orr down to dinner, he was saying to himself, "What an uncommonly pretty girl!"—and he was not alluding to Miss Orr, who on this evening looked even more peaky and pink-eyed than usual. I'm afraid the captain was not very attentive to her.

CHAPTER II.

PLIGHTED TROTH.

WHEN James Trefusis and Marian parted after their unexpected meeting in the Park, he asked for and obtained her address. The presence of the old Captain was, of course, a restraint upon the freedom with which they could otherwise have talked over old times. Marian naturally could not tell James all about her father, and he felt a delicacy in questioning her about her altered fortunes. So they tacitly agreed to meet before long, though Marian could not help considering to herself how she was to arrange to see him again.

She had not waited many days before she received a note from James expressing his anxiety to learn what had happened to such old and kind friends, and asking her to allow him to see her or hear from her before long. What could she do ? Sundays were her only

holidays, and then Alice would be terribly disappointed if she did not see her in the Park as usual. To be sure there was no reason why James should not come to their rendezvous—of course he took as much interest in Alice as in her, or so she tried to persuade herself. But she had much to tell him of which Alice was ignorant—and of which she had better remain ignorant. And, then, somehow this poor girl wished—selfishly enough, perhaps, but affection is jealous in this way—to have James Trefusis all to herself. It seemed only yesterday that in her young days at Polvrehan she had flown to him for aid and counsel in all her little difficulties. And now she indeed needed help and advice.

She was at a loss what to do. She delayed for a day or two before she answered James, racking her brains to try and devise some expedient for appointing a meeting. And just when she felt that he might be offended at her longer silence, chance did for her what she had failed to do for herself.

The house of Lacquoigne, stirred for awhile by the arrival of the heir and his laurels, settled down again to its melancholy calm and hollow grandeur. The season, as I

have said, was just commencing, and there were not very many people in town as yet, so those who gave entertainments were glad enough to ask the Lacquoignes, in order to fill up their rooms. They would have to be invited sooner or later, and by being invited now might be made to do good service. Accordingly, night after night the chariot, with its very shaky job-horses, was in requisition, and my lord and my lady rolled about from party to party, having nothing to console themselves withal for the discomfort save the recollection that their absence from home was a saving in gas, dinner or supper, as the case might be, and wine.

The Honourable Captain Henry Vorian had never cared much to go into society. He had always preferred his club, where he had his whist or his game at billiards, to balls and dinners. His Crimean campaign had not increased his inclination for fashionable gaiety, so he steadily declined all invitations on the plea of ill-health.

He lounged about lazily in my lord's library, converted for the nonce into a smoking-room, which it resembled quite as much as a library, the shelves not being overcrowded with books, owing to his lord-

ship's caring little for any sort of reading beyond a study of the Game Laws. But even a smoking-room wearies a man when he has no company, so occasionally Captain Vorian would find his way up to the nursery, where he romped with the children, or chatted with the governess.

I don't mean for one moment to accuse the gallant gentleman of conduct so unbecoming an officer and a gentleman as would be implied by a knowledge of the works of one William Shakespeare, an obscure cad, who once held swells' horses at a theatre. But I must say that had I considered him capable of so grave a breach of military etiquette, I should have thought him guilty of a plagiarism on that playwright's tragedy of "Othello." He found out that Miss Alice Carlyle never looked to better advantage than when she was listening to hair-breadth 'scapes and encounters in the imminent deadly breach. Her large blue eyes would dilate, and her soft cheek flush—now and then her brows would knit with a pretty frown, and anon her rosy lips would smile sweetly on some recital of a deed of "derring do." And as it was very pleasant to excite these pretty phenomena,

Henry Vorian found a great delight in telling stories of the war to his brothers and sisters, as he leant back in the rocking-chair with half-closed eyes watching Alice's face.

Every man is proud of exercising a power over a woman, and when that woman happens to be pretty, he is probably rather fond of indulging his pride. But then, you see, a pretty woman is a dangerous article to have to do with. It must have been fascinating work in the old days to be a compounder of poisons—to be able to enshrine

> Pure death in an earring, a casket,
> A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket—

to make such exquisite drugs that their mere beauty disarmed suspicion—to handle little bright-hued phials, each one containing a human life. But, then, the pursuit had its perils. Not to mention such a drawback as the intense inclination that must have sprung out of this awful familiarity—the strong temptation to take just one little ruby drop, which was certain instant dissolution—there were a thousand haphazard chances. The failure of the silken thread that bound on the glass mask!—and the

poisoner fell shrivelled by the fumes he had himself evoked—the merest scratch with the tiny stiletto, which was so useful in conveying the deadly grain into the ripe peach, and left no mark of puncture—the merest scratch with that, and death coursed like an electric spark through the veins, and stayed the heart's pulsations for ever! Lovely woman may not feel flattered at the figure I have chosen to illustrate the danger of trifling with her power. But in truth I know no more apt simile—nothing that can so fully express the insidious influence of her beauty, its fatal fascination, or the sudden revolution which turns the master into the slave.

Let the Honourable Henry Vorian beware, therefore. He is becoming giddy with his success already.

When he learns that my lord and my lady and he have been invited to Sir Arthur Mostyn's, at Richmond, to spend the next Sunday, and that my lord and my lady are going, and "he can do as he pleases"—so his mother kindly informs him—he makes up his mind to stay at home. But he is not content with that. He actually has the audacity to tell Miss Alice Carlyle that

he hopes she is not going out on that Sunday, or he shall be a very lonely and disconsolate invalid. And, indeed, of late he has been far from well. Whether it is that he is a little shy of appearing abroad in his dilapidated condition, or that he finds something at home which disinclines him to go abroad, one thing is certain, that he does not take enough exercise, and his doctor tells him so, but he does not regard his doctor. He grows pale and languid, and lacks appetite, and nobody regards it, for my lord is busy and my lady is cold, and only the little governess has eyes to see that he is not improving.

She, at all events, cannot resist his appeal for pity and companionship, so she writes off at once to Marian to say that she will not be able to be at the rendezvous in the Park, as usual, next Sunday; and she and the captain have a very pleasant, quiet day to themselves.

How is it that my lord and my lady are kept in ignorance of the friendship which is springing up between the heir of the house and the poor governess?

Well, you remember that neither my lord nor my lady were particularly popular with

the servants, and Henry Vorian was. He had an open hand—except when there was a question of paying a debt—and though he had not much to give, a little went a long way with the under-paid domestics of the Lacquoigne establishment. As for Alice, she was pretty and polite, and gave little trouble, and her friend Martha gave her a good character; so nobody made it a duty to tell her ladyship what was occurring under that remarkable feature—her very own aristocratic nose. The housekeeper was the only person who might have laid the information, but she had been left at Beaudechet, which was open to the public now, and must therefore be placed in charge of some one who would look sharply after the fees.

When Marian received Alice's letter, she was a little surprised, but by no means suspected the real reason of her sister's failure to keep the usual appointment. She wrote at once to James, telling him that she would meet him, if he liked, on the following Sunday, at the place where they had encountered each other first.

You may imagine that James Trefusis was delighted enough to receive her letter.

"J. T.," said Charlie Crawhall, who was

smoking a pipe with him when the letter arrived, "that missive is from a lady—don't deny it! And the blush which mantles your generous cheek as you peruse its contents reveals that you love her, and that the news is good."

James does not answer—is scarcely conscious of his words; but, guessing their import, without raising his eyes from the writing, takes up the tobacco jar, and poises it as if about to launch it at the head of Charlie, who cowers in exaggerated terror, and laughs merrily.

"Good luck to you, Jim," he says presently, when the other has read the letter, folded it up, and placed it in his pocket; "a fellow ought always to love a woman, if he is to be worth anything. It makes him so much better."

"This from you, heretic!"

"Even from me. But why 'heretic'? You never knew me laugh at the true passion. By Heaven, Jim, I think it one of the greatest things in the world—or out of it. My philosophy is exactly expressed in the words—

'For Love is Heaven, and Heaven is Love.'

It is a theory of mine, Jim, that it means all that is contained in the words 'our future state.' I believe that hereafter our happiness or misery will consist simply in the consciousness of how we have loved and been loved. I'd sooner have a few good folk love me—ay, I'd sooner be loved by a dog or a cat—than be a lonely great man of the age. Can you conceive any worse torment for a soul than the knowledge of the love it might have gathered—the affection it slighted? Can you picture a purer happiness than in a community of spirits reposing in the consciousness that they were loving and beloved? And of course in that world the differences of love, which are merely the earthly robes which clothe them here, will be merged in one vast pure emotion."

"A startling creed, Charlie, for some people," said James, who was hardly listening to his friend, so rapt was he in his thoughts of Marian.

"Yes, perhaps. But is not the spirit of Christianity just exactly this? Does not its history point to this? Love—the great keynote of the grandest history ever told—the behest spoken by holy lips that were exceeding loving!"

There was a pause, during which, in the growing darkness, Charlie's pipe burned up and died out fitfully as he puffed at it excitedly. Then he broke silence again, as if he were unconsciously speaking aloud—carrying on a train of thought.

"It is impossible even to believe that the love which dumb creatures bestow on us is lost altogether. Did you ever have a favourite dog, Jim?"

James answered in the negative.

"I had one that lived with me constantly for twelve years, and died of old age in spite of all my care and attention. Nobody knew how that dog loved me. A word from me made her happy for the day; my step on the stair that led to my chambers woke her from her soundest sleep, and brought her to welcome me at the door. Even when she grew too old to move about much, she would lie and follow me about with her honest, faithful eyes. I can't tell you how I suffered when—when the poor old thing died"—and here Charlie's voice broke. "And do you tell me," he continued, suppressing his emotion, "that this love is lost? I won't believe it."

I think Charlie Crawhall admired and liked

James Trefusis more than ever after this discovery. Poor Charlie was a lonely man himself, but he had a little world of love in the affection of his sister's children, who worshipped this simple Bohemian with the fondest and most unchanging fidelity.

Sunday came at last. How slowly that week had gone by, only James Trefusis could tell! And then, as the afternoon bells were chiming, he made his way to the Park, and waited for Marian's arrival.

She came punctual to her hour, and looked —for poor, plain Marian—almost pretty, thanks to the flush in her generally pale cheek, and the happy light in her frank gray eyes.

There was no barrier of formality between them now. They were on an equality—both workers, toiling for daily bread—not separated by any fancied distinction of wealth or position.

James drew her hand through his arm; and so they sauntered off across the sward for a few moments in delighted silence. Neither needed to speak. It was enough that they were near each other, and apart from the world.

Presently, James pressed Marian for a history of what had happened since he left

Polvrehan. You may be sure that he was deeply affected at the death of his kind patron, George Carlyon. Marian did not hint at the belief she entertained of the awful truth, that he had committed suicide; but the sudden striking down of his old generous friend in the prime of life made James's heart ache enough. When Marian told him of Captain Cormack and the sale and mortgage of the property, James ground his teeth, and made a solemn vow to himself that, if it ever lay in his power, he would make that man pay the penalty of his crime to the uttermost farthing!

One might be inclined to think this a little ungrateful to the villain who, unconsciously certainly, but nevertheless most effectually, furthered James's suit. But honest, unselfish James—provided only that he had been able to learn that those words of Marian's had deceived him as to her opinion of him—would have been content to resign all hope rather than win her by such a reverse of fortune as this. He would have striven and struggled to win her; but it would have been by raising himself, not dragging her down. What were toil and waiting, or any tortures, compared with this woman's love?

Worth how well those dark gray eyes—
That hair so dark and dear, how worth!
That a man should strive and agonise,
And taste a very hell on earth,
For the hope of such a prize!

When Marian had finished her relation, she asked his story in return. Thereupon, with a certain grim humour, behind which he strove to conceal the bitterness born of disappointment and neglect, he described the invention of his gun, and the disheartening result of his efforts to gain recognition of its merits.

"But," he said, at length, brightening, "it must come at last! There must and will be an alteration in the management of Government business, and then my turn will come. The utter failure of our military arrangements in this Crimean campaign will cause a revolution which may forward my object. All I want is a trial, and I must some day or other get a chance of proving how good the gun is; until then I must be patient. Work and wait—wait and win—that is my motto."

"A courageous one, at least, James. But the knight who carries it on his shield must have a stout heart, or he will fail to carry out its purport."

"My heart has been tried sufficiently. I know what it is to work and wait. I have worked; I have waited: I still wait, Marian."

He lowered his voice a little as he said this, and looked at her earnestly. Did she divine his meaning? Did she know that he was asking her for a presage? I cannot tell. But she too lowered her voice as she spoke.

"Believe in your motto—believe that as you have waited so you shall win!"

How poor James's heart beat at those words! He was about to risk his all now. He was about to speak, and tell his love, and if she rejected it he must lose the little happiness he now possessed—the opportunity of seeing her—of speaking to her—of walking with her. But his heart told him that these words of hers were a favourable omen.

He drew her aside under some trees, to a retired bench. They sat down for a moment in silence. Neither looked at the other, but by-and-by James, without raising his eyes from his apparently all-absorbing occupation of scratching queer figures in the gravel with the point of his stick, spoke with a low voice.

"I said just now that I knew what it was

to wait. Do you know for what I have waited?"

Marian did not answer in words, but shook her head, which action James noted out of the corner of his eye.

"When I was a poor lad in your father's employment, I had one dream that I half feared to entertain; but it was the thing that made life dear to me, and I dared to cling to it. As I grew up, and found that I had been blessed with some little talent that I could turn to good account, the dream seemed to be not utterly impossible of realization. I strove, and failed; but the failure was not the worst thing I had to bear. Smarting under the bitterness of my disappointment, I returned home, to hear, as I believed, a rebuke to my daring visionary——"

"No, no, James!" Marian broke in, "I know what you mean. Had you heard all, you would have judged otherwise. But what am I saying?"

"Say this much more, Marian. Say that you pardon the presumption of the poor lad who dared to love you—that you do not despise the man whose only hope has been to become worthy of you—who would die to serve you!"

"Yes, yes," she murmured, "it is I who need pardon and pity!"

"Can you love me, Marian?" he asked, drawing himself up now boldly, and taking her hand in his.

"Hush! hush! it must not be! It is you who stoop now—you, the man of science, the successful inventor, who stoop to the poor governess. It must not be."

"I should have dared to ask your love, if my poor first invention had succeeded. Would you have rejected me?"

She shook her head.

"Have pity upon me now. Give me an object to live for; give me strength and new hope to struggle on with."

Poor Marian! But she was obstinate. If she wrung his heart, her own suffered terribly. But she could not dare to believe that this feeling of his was more than generous pity—she could not think love would have survived so long after those fatal words of hers.

Still he pressed his suit, and still, though he could see plainly now that his love was returned, she would not speak the few words which were to make him blest indeed.

There was one other obstacle which Marian

saw between them. She had not yet told him all about her father. Would he not shrink from the daughter of a suicide? In her despair, in her terror, in her nervous wish to escape further questioning and imploring, she determined to tell James.

"You do not know all," she said; "if I told you, you would shrink from me."

"Never. Tell me what this imaginary terror is."

"Oh, never breathe it to a soul—spare his memory for the kind feelings he had for you. My father committed suicide!"

James was horror-struck. Marian misinterpreted the meaning of his distress.

"I knew you would shrink from me."

"No, indeed. You mistake me; it was grief at the fate of one whom I respected so fondly that unnerved me. But you—oh, Marian, there's nothing in the world—not even your cruelty in withholding your love, that can alter my love for you."

He caught her hand and drew her towards him, so that he could look into her face. He read relenting there.

"Speak, Marian—the one little word—do you love me?"

She sprang up, broke from his grasp,

shook his hand, and then, whispering faintly, "Yes, yes!" hurried away, almost ran, leaving him wrapt in the delicious sense of requited love. With a noble instinct, he did not attempt to stop her or follow her. It was enough. She loved him!

What were failure, and disappointment, and delay, now that he was sure of this woman's love? He could toil and wait now, for life could not but be full of calm delight, with that certainty at his heart to whisper comfort and hope in the darkest hour.

That night the hearts of James and Marian were full of peace and thankfulness.

CHAPTER III.

WHEAL CORMACK AND ITS FORTUNES.

WE must not, I think, quite lose sight of the amiable Captain Cormack just yet, for he has a part of some importance to play in our history presently. Besides, James Trefusis, who is not the sort of man to forget a promise, has registered a solemn vow to make the captain atone some day or other, sooner or later, for the wrongs he has committed. We may be sure of one thing at any rate—namely, that Justice, lame though she be of one foot, is limping after this man to exact her penalty. Whether she will make use of James's hand to accomplish her end, we do not yet know, but we may depend upon it that she will, when her time arrives, claim her prisoner.

In the meantime we will, if you please, take a trip down into Cornwall, and see how the captain thrives on his ill-gotten gains.

He has established himself at Polvrehan, and lives very jollily, seeing plenty of company—for he seems to like any companionship better than solitude now, and generally has a friend or so staying with him.

The beautiful valley is as beautiful as ever. Rella runs blue as of old, beneath the blue sky, and still the green woods and the lush meadows are bright and fragrant. Nature would not curtail her bounty because this man was a villain and a murderer.

The foundry, too, was still busy and prosperous. For of late mining had been looking up in the neighbourhood of Polvrehan, in the West. Several famous lodes had been hit off on the Carndowns, and fortunes had been made in plenty. Wherefore new companies without number were springing up on all sides, and there was no lack of rich adventurers to pour their gold in the yawning shafts, in the wild hope of getting tin and copper brought up in exchange. It was like throwing away sovereigns to catch halfpence, and many of them lost heavily; but just as in battle a fresh man steps forward to fill up the gap where a comrade has just been shot down, so as soon as one man had been squeezed dry, and his last shilling had been

flung into the yawning shaft-mouth, up started another to take his place and shed his coin.

It is an ascertained fact that the money yearly invested in mining speculation is far beyond the profit returned—that, in fact, mining is a dead loss. Yet people will not learn wisdom; each man lives in hopes of robbing his neighbour, and making the successful hit that must, by the law of statistics, render necessary the bankruptcy of several of his fellows, in order to keep the balance adjusted.

Henry Cormack fattened on the folly of the mine madmen. On many a deserted mine, engines of his building were rusting in the abandoned engine-houses, awaiting the winding-up of the company's affairs. But yet orders for new ones were constantly arriving, and the furnaces were always in full blast, for the old prestige of the firm was still great, and brought Cormack customers. I mention the old prestige purposely, because Cormack was rather injuring than improving the reputation of the business.

How is it that rogues, whom the Devil prospers, so often waste their advantages? Here was Cormack, a penniless adventurer,

now raised to a good position, with plenty of money, and an old and well-established business. You would fancy that he would take care, if not to improve, at all events to keep unimpaired the character of the firm. But he did not; he was seized with that grasping meanness, that greediness for immediate profits, which is the ruin of so many fine undertakings. He was, as the sailors say, losing the ship for want of a ha'porth of pitch.

The men he employed were inferior workmen, the materials he put into his engines were only second-rate, and he lowered his prices to undersell another firm which had lately opened in the same line near Penzance.

The result was that the engines of Carlyon, Cormack, and Co. were by no means in such high repute as in the days when poor drunken George Carlyon looked after the factory.

Some of the engines that had been turned out latterly had been failures, and Cormack had been obliged to patch, and repair, and alter, until they cost him more than he had got for them. But, on the other hand, many were quite good enough to survive the mines for which they were erected, and on these he made a handsome profit.

Since Carlyon's death he had struck up a close friendship with Carlyon's lawyer, whose name did not stand too high for honest dealings. Mr. Creech was a very shrewd old man, who had done many a roguish act in his day. He was much employed on political and mining business, and had great experience in both matters, so that he was sought after for these specialities. He and Cormack got on well together, and did many a sly stroke of business in partnership. It was a curious thing, that Cormack took great pains to keep the old man in good humour;—he was a cranky man in his temper was Creech —and Cormack was not the kind of fellow to spend such trouble unless it were for a profitable purpose. There was a mystery about this, which I hardly think is cleared up by the explanation that the captain required the lawyer's services in the promotion of the long-projected mine on the moors behind Polvrehan. For this scheme was to be worked now. The captain saw how the rage for mining was spreading, and he felt that the time had arrived for setting his little speculation afoot. He, however, had no intention of originating the mine himself. Creech was to get together the company,

and Cormack was to give him permission to work the lode on his property. What Creech was to get for his share of the swindle, I cannot say exactly, but it was far more than the magnitude of the work he would have to do entitled him to.

The lawyer knew well how to set about his task. He set some miners out of employment to prospect for ore—that is to say, to see if there were any chance of getting on a rich lode on the moors. He put in command over the prospecters a mine-captain whose occupation was gone, thanks to the utter collapse of the last company he had worked for. You will hardly wonder, then, that before many days elapsed these industrious searchers had found indications of a vein of metal, which the mine-captain—retired, on no pay—did not hesitate to declare the finest he had seen for years. He brought samples with him to Mr. Creech's office, where they were on view for many a long day afterwards—and very fine samples they were. Unluckily, however, the captain, in returning from prospecting, had called in to see an old friend, who was the agent at Wheal Polsneuth, a most prosperous mine, and his friend had given him a few specimens of the

ore in the last level driven; and the captain had—inadvertently, of course—put these in the same pocket with his samples from the moors; so that it was possible they got mixed. The prospecters themselves were a little surprised when they saw the samples on Mr. Creech's table, and failed to recognize the stones they had come upon on the moors. Now, as they had taken the trouble, in order to prevent disappointment, to carry the samples with them to the moor in their pockets, they surely ought to have known them again. So, on the whole, I am bound to admit that the captain must have made a mistake.

In plain truth, all these rogues were thinking to outwit one another. They did not dare trust each other, or they could have acted capitally in concert. First of all, there were the working miners, in want of a job, passing off sham samples on the captain. Then there was the captain, in search of a situation, adding his false specimens to delude Mr. Creech. And, finally, there was cunning old Creech, seeing through all their tricks, and playing his own cards. He knew that Henry Cormack would back him up well in this scheme; and that if, after all, they did

come on a lucky find, the captain had made his arrangements for their sharing the haul between them. And very possibly old Creech had a nice little plan of his own whereby he intended, if the speculation were a success, to stand in alone for the profits. Diamond cut diamond is a pretty and very interesting game!

The lawyer knew exactly where to lay his hand on the sort of men he wanted for shareholders. So he had printed a nice little map of the "sett," or tract of land to be granted for mining purposes by Cormack, and sent it about to the likely men. The shares were taken up by them like wildfire, and a meeting was held to appoint the officers, and settle the name under which the sett was to be worked.

Mr. Creech was appointed purser; the agent was, as might be expected, that acute man, Captain Tregenna, the discoverer of the encouraging samples. I need hardly mention that the prospectors got work on the mine, which, it was agreed, should be called Wheal Cormack, in honour of the lord of the sett, who was a small shareholder, but a liberal landlord, and invited the company to lunch, where there was a good deal of bad cham-

pagne and worse oratory. And so the exploration of the moors beyond Polvrehan was decided upon.

Cormack had not yet become so blindly greedy that he could not see the advisability of sparing the goose which might lay golden eggs. He wanted to foster this scheme, and was really imposed upon by Mr. Creech's fine samples. His intention was to get this mine into a prosperous, dividend-paying condition before he took the lion's share of the profits, in order to encourage other adventurers to take setts on his land.

By a strange chance the scheme turned out well. Here had these poor rogues been lying, and cheating, and descending to every possible baseness and meanness, and yet if they had only gone honestly to work they would have found bounteous Mother Nature prepared to reward their efforts. Even from the dishonest point of view, honesty was their best policy, and I will tell you why. Mr. Creech had established an understanding with Captain Tregenna. As soon as the captain discovered any indications of coming fortune, he was to let Mr. Creech know, in order that he might depreciate the shares, and quietly buy up as many of them as possible. But the captain

never had a chance of giving the lawyer "the office."

The mine began working with a powerful water-wheel, to turn which they pressed Rella's youthful energies into the service. The shareholders had wanted to have an engine of Cormack, but he generously declined to take the order. He pointed out that they had ample water-power close at hand to enable them to give the new district a fair trial. It would be time enough to put up an engine when their prosperity was sufficient to warrant their sinking another shaft.

Accordingly, the mine was worked by water-power, which is economical, and the captain kept down the wages of his men as low as he could; and so the first turf was cut, and the shaft was sunk, and the top level began to be driven all in due time, and at no very great cost.

It so chanced that community of knavery in the prospecting business bound together some four of the miners who were employed in this top level. One day they got the captain into a talk, and falling on the subject of "tributing," undertook to drive the level a certain length on that system. The captain, setting them down for fools, consented.

"Tributing," I should explain, is a gambling method of working not unpopular among the miners. A certain number of them agree to clear out a certain number of fathoms of the level or gallery of the mine, on the understanding that if they come upon metal they are to receive a pre-arranged percentage on the price at which it sells. On the other hand, if they do not find, they get not a penny for their labour. They are paid for their success, not their work. No wonder that the captain set our adventurous friends down as fools, for entering into a bargain of this sort so soon after the mine was set to work.

He would have altered his opinion possibly if he had seen one of them on the previons day suddenly throw down his pick in the middle of his work, and hurry off to bring his friends and show them the result of his last few strokes. He had hit on the lode—a vein of rich ore, promising, to all appearance, to be very deep and wide. It did not cost such experienced hands very long to efface with mud and water all traces of the lucky strokes of the pick, so that when the captain came on his rounds he found the fortunate finder stolidly chip-chip-chipping at the hard unpromising "back" of the working.

What wheels within wheels of trickery! Diamond cut diamond still being played, you see, fathoms down in the bowels of the earth.

You may imagine the rage of Captain Tregenna when he found how the tributers had got the better of him. You may picture the disappointment of Mr. Creech when the good news reached him, and the shares in Wheal Cormack went up to fabulous prices. You may guess how savage Cormack was to hear how near the surface the lode lay—he might have worked it himself if he had known it.

Yes, here was a stroke of fortune for all these men, and they were none of them grateful for it. They were disgusted at having an opportunity of making money honestly. They would infinitely have preferred to earn a few extra pounds with infinite trouble and anxiety, and dishonesty.

The only people who seemed to enjoy the windfall were the tributers, and their enjoyment was short-lived and dearly purchased. As soon as they had worked out their appointed ground, they took their money and went away, to spend it in a carouse. Unlimited cider and gin, and nothing to do, were doubtless great delights; but when the money was all gone, and they woke up sick

and sore and sorry, to find themselves without a penny, and utterly unfit for work, I doubt whether they were inclined to look upon the cutting of the lode in Wheal Cormack as such a subject for congratulation as it had appeared to be at first.

CHAPTER IV.

FROM ONE FEVER TO ANOTHER.

"IS Captain Vorian coming down to breakfast? Will you inquire please, Thomas," said my lady, as she sat at the table with her aristocratic nose grotesquely exaggerated in the reflection on the round surface of the silver tea-pot in front of her. The small silver was always in use in the Lacquoigne household, or at least such of it as Mr. Lacking had not found it convenient to leave in charge of the landlord of that noted hostelry, "The Three Bezants." My lady was acquainted with the fact that silver was by far the most economical ware. Crockery and china are perishable things, and it takes money to replace them; but family plate is everlasting, and only looks the more antique for a few dents and bruises.

So my lady sat at the breakfast-table, frowning at her own image on the tea-pot, in

which massive alembic a pinch of "four shilling black" was doing its best to turn an overpowering amount of hot water to a very pale amber, when it would take the courtesy title of tea, and be poured out for the consumption of the noble family.

"Will you go up and inquire, if you please, Thomas," said her ladyship.

"Yes, m'leddy," responded Thomas, who was the fullest-fledged footman on the establishment, and therefore on the eve of departure.

His pale pink calves twinkled fitfully between the banisters as he mounted to the young heir's room, knocked at the door, and delivered the noble lady's message.

"Tell my mother I'm feeling very unwell, and shan't be down yet. I shall be glad of a cup here."

My lady raised her eyebrows when she received this answer, and gave orders to have Captain Vorian attended to—poured out for his benefit the first cup of straw-coloured fluid, muddied it with a chalky compound that put itself forward as milk, and made a pretence of sweetening it with a diminutive knob of sugar at which a canary would have turned up its beak in scorn. No doubt, when

that unwholesome draught was set before Henry Vorian, he wished himself back at Scutari, where, at all events, the sick appetite was tempted with rich and nourishing things.

By-and-by my lord came up to pay a visit, and was really alarmed at his son's appearance; for the young fellow was looking as white as a girl, though there was a bright spot in either cheek that would have alarmed any experienced eye, but was rather a consolation to my lord, who did not trace fever in the sign.

"Why, my dear boy, you must have the doctor at once. I'll send for Pelligue. It's no good going on like this!"

Now, Dr. Pelligue was one of those fortunate doctors whose skill had gained him—what many unknown practitioners deserved no less—a wide recognition, and a large and profitable practice.

Hitherto our poor nobleman had employed a Mr. Jones, who had qualified in a chemist's shop, and huddled through an examination at Apothecaries' Hall, and who did not at first sight "come expensive," though when you looked over his bill and totted up draughts and pills that never were taken, and would



have done no good if they had been, he was by no means so cheap as he looked—even if you credited his side of the account with the sum realised by selling the bottles.

Dr. Pelligue might fairly have declined to attend Henry Vorian. No one knew better than he did that my lord was a poor paymaster. And my lord had no claims on Dr. Pelligue—had never employed him, had never asked him to his house. The doctor might have left Henry Vorian in the hands of 'Pothecary Jones without in the least causing professional etiquette to moult a feather.

But Dr. Pelligue was one of those medical men whose notions of professional etiquette are modelled after the conduct of a certain Good Physician, who lived some eighteen hundred years or so ago. Though the timepiece on his consulting-room mantelpiece chimed the quarters with a shower of sovereigns and marked the hour with bank-notes to the amount, he would devote all care and attention to the hopeless case of the consumptive girl, whose father was a cabman in that mews round the corner, and from whom he would never take a penny. Take a penny! Whence came the wine and jellies, the only things which the good doctor could

prescribe to ease — it was impossible to arrest—the approach of death? And then there was the wife of poor Sawfner, the unrecognised painter, with her broken constitution; or the better half of Koppey, the struggling literary hack, with her rheumatism; or Koppey himself, with an overworked brain; and a host of patients of a like impecunious order always coming to Pelligue, and tendering the fees screwed out goodness knows how, and always refused by the good man, though by so doing he really lost two guineas—the one he might have taken from his poor patient, and the one he might have taken from a rich one in his or her place.

Pelligue was not the man to refuse to help Harry Vorian out of the hands of fever. He had a catholic sympathy which could feel for a poor nobleman as well as a poor scribe or limner. He refused the fee my lord tendered the first time he attended the captain. And mark how delicately he did it! "No, my lord," he said cheerfully, waving away the little screw of paper: "you and I have sat together at good men's feasts" (my lord had never invited Pelligue to his house), "and I make it a rule not to do anything of this

sort. Besides, I have registered a vow at Apothecaries' Hall"—he loved this joke, this noble man—"never to take a penny for attending a Crimean hero. No! I can't do it. I refused to take a fee from Lord —— the other day, and he would never forgive me if I showed favour. Good-bye, my lord!"

And he stepped into the quiet little brougham that spun off on who can tell how many errands of mercy.

Is this an exaggerated picture? Heaven forbid! There is nothing in this world easier than class depreciation, and funny men have taken a delight in writing down doctors. I grant there are black sheep in the profession as there are everywhere—in the Church even, which is the only profession that I can consent to think higher than the medical. A strong argument in favour of Apostolical Succession is to be found in the Rev. Mr. Judas, in this day: and there are Dr. Johns to be found in the *Medical Guide*. But then they are only so many proofs of the sublime vitality of the institutions which exist in spite of them. Of all classes of men, literary men, who owe so much to doctors, should be ashamed to jeer at their benefactors. When I read of the mode in which the "weak-

minded bird" is treated with a view to the production of *Pâté de Foie Gras*, I always feel that literary men are very like geese—that their sedentary, stimulating work acts on their brains as the fireside coop acts on the liver of the anserine. And that a man is kept alive, when he is a mere sensorial fungus on a dead trunk, is due to doctors. If we can't be grateful to them, don't let us abuse them.

Thanks to Dr. Pelligue, Henry Vorian was before long in a position to fight off the fever. But he was very weak and nervous. He must be enlivened—kept up; plenty of nourishing food, and something to keep him cheerful—so said the doctor. And the next day he brought an amusing book, presented to him by its author, a grateful patient. He suggested that somebody should read it aloud to the captain, and wished to press Harriet into the service. But Harriet was not very proficient in the art of reading.

"Well, well; if you can't, I dare say this young lady can and will," said Pelligue, turning to Alice. He had met them on the stairs outside the school-room, which was converted now into what Harry Vorian called the convalescent ward.

Alice, of course, was ready to make herself useful in any way, and particularly charmed to make herself agreeable to Henry. So she was installed as Scheherazade.

Oh, Doctor Pelligue, little, I hope and trust, did you think what mischief you were making! Innocently, I most sincerely presume, you put the lighted candle to the cask of powder. And if you are to blame, what are we to say about young Styles, whose novel was of the most fatal tendency? Of course, all my readers know that now successful author's first book. "Edith Aglionby, or the Hall and the Hovel," is a thrilling love tale, which would inculcate the dangerous doctrine that Love is really everything, and that ermine and freize always marry and live happily, after an amount of suffering and distress, without which it would be impossible to conduct their loves through three substantial volumes. I must just remind my readers that Edith Aglionby is the daughter of a Duke, and her lover is the intellectual son of the head gamekeeper; that he preserves his adored from a mad bull —what a blessing bovine lunacy has been to us authors!—is taken up on suspicion of murdering his rival — Lord Something-or-

other, who was really assassinated by the Duke with his own ducal hands, because he was rightful heir to the estate; that he is transported for the crime, in accordance with the laws of "The Novelist's Own Statute Book" for such cases made and provided; that he discovers a large gold tract, and returns to England to find Edith about to be knocked down at St. George's altar to the highest bidder on account of her noble parent's impoverished state, brought on by the necessity for buying off an accomplice after the fact, in the murder of Lord Something-or-other, by an annual sacrifice of about twice his ducal income. When I have recalled thus much, no doubt my readers will be able to fill in the sketch with the rescue of the fair Edith by the mysterious millionaire—with the rescue, the recognition, the repentance, the reunion, and all the other "r's" that are necessary to pull up the story with a resonant rattling rush, amid the riotous rapture of the readers of romances.

Styles may not be flattered to learn that Alice never read as far as the *denouement*. When they got as far as the love-passages, she and the captain shut the book, and acted the remainder. It was only natural that the

captain, in his weak state, all the more eager for pity and whatever is related to it, because of his feebleness, mental and bodily, should be very susceptible of the charms of a kind-hearted, pretty girl perpetually hovering about him to perform little acts of tender care which only a woman is capable of. It was natural, too, that when her low, musical voice tremulously spoke the love-passages in Edith Aglionby's place, he should feel very like a young and highly intellectual game-keeper, and discover an under-current of real feeling beneath the feigned sentiment of the story.

As for Alice, her soft heart and coquettish disposition were both drawing her towards the young and handsome invalid. Her breast was filled with the warmest pity for him—he was so good-looking! He must suffer much—he was so agreeable! It is an inherent inclination of our nature to suppose that lovely things suffer more than ugly or plain ones. We pluck a rose half regretfully—we snap a twig without remorse. We crush a worm—we touch a butterfly daintily. There was, then, nothing very extraordinary in the feeling Alice entertained for the young soldier.

Was it love?

It is a difficult question to answer. Love is a genus with so many underlying species, that it is almost impossible to be sure of it, or, at all events, to be able to estimate it at its real value. The gamut ranges from the love which is reported to be born in the Irishman, who

> Meets with a friend
> And for love knocks him down,

to the intense devotion of the woman whose husband takes his chief exercise and delight in beating and trampling on her, and who yet spares him, and declines to say a word against him in spite of the entreaties and threats of the magistrate.

I can't exactly affix its proper *differentia* or *proprium* to the species of love which Alice felt. I have said, I think, that her nature was not capable of the deep passion which is half of life to some of us.

She certainly pitied Henry Vorian, and pity is akin to love. But that very maxim proves, in the clearest possible way, that pity is not love; and however nearly allied they may be, they are not identical.

> If you join two lives, there is oft a scar;
> They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
> One near one is too far.



Nevertheless, love or no love, whatever the emotion was, both Henry and Alice felt satisfied that it was the great, real passion. And so, to the surprise of neither, one day, as Alice had reached the middle of some touching interview between Edith and the intellectual gamekeeper, a something was said or done—a word or a gesture—that broke down the frail barrier between them, and the whole world was forgotten in two brief minutes of love-talk—of suing and pleading, of acknowledging and denying, of mutual vows and confessions, sealed with one long, rapturous kiss. Yes, my dear Mr. Styles, you must take it as a compliment to your powers of writing pathetic love business, that when they reached that celebrated scene in the fir plantation, they shut up the book and finished the story for themselves.

I cannot help thinking that, when the first rapture was over, our young people must have been a little cooled—not to say chilled—by the reflection, "What would my lord and my lady say?"

But Henry Vorian had had very much trouble with debt and poverty, and had always managed somehow "to scrape through," as he called it, until his nature had acquired a

marvellous elasticity. He never despaired, and was accustomed to comfort himself with a picture of what might be, a picture which he touched up, and brightened, and strengthened, until it was all *couleur de rose.*

In this way he talked himself, and Alice too, into a belief that the noble lord his father, and the noble lady his mother, would be only too delighted to learn that their son had given his heart to so lovely, accomplished, and virtuous a girl. He drew a *tableau* of his lordly parent blessing them both, while his ladylike mother looked on with tears of joy coursing down her aristocratic nose.

But in spite of the consolation and hope the pair derived from this mental process of painting, they were not quite so deluded as to be blind to the necessity of keeping their attachment a secret for a little while, until (as the captain said) with the happy philosophy which carried him through so many trials, "something turned up."

I'm afraid Alice was not so constant in keeping up her Sunday afternoon meetings with her sister now; but she never told Marian the reason, and somehow forgot to talk about the captain to her. Marian was too absorbed in her own love affairs to

notice this latter omission, though she a little wondered at Alice's frequent absences from the old quiet nook in the Park.

You may be sure James Trefusis profited by Alice's frequent absences. He somehow was always loitering about somewhere in the Park on Sunday afternoons, and would join Marian as if quite by accident; and then the day would be all the brighter for both of them, and the hours would fly by—oh, so fast!

CHAPTER V.

WHAT MARIAN CARRIED TO THE HOSPITAL.

TIME passed for both Alice and Marian very pleasantly indeed for a few bright months of early summer. They did not meet every Sunday, it is true; but when they did not, the one was nursing her interesting invalid, and the other was passing her brief holiday in blissful content with the man whom she loved, yet still regarded with the respect—almost worship—which he as a boy had inspired in her young heart.

Is there anything in the world so delightful as these calm days along the borders of the troubled ocean of passion? We all furl our sails in them at some time or other in the voyage of life. Happy are they who cast anchor in them in the quiet evening of wedded life. These two poor girls were not so blessed now. To-day they linger in the pleasant lagoon, with the velvet sward

stretching down to let the lip of the rising tide kiss its verdure. To-morrow, it may be, or the day after, the sea will come roaring in and sweep them out of their peaceful harbour into the ocean of unrest. Do I say it may? It must. Round that stern promontory yonder—like my lady's nose; it is, indeed! —the pretty skiff of Alice's destiny is fated to be whirled, perchance to shipwreck. Nor will Marian's boatload of happiness be suffered to sleep long on the warm sand, with the tide so far away you can only just hear its whisper. To none of us, and therefore not to Marian, does the blessed haven reveal itself too soon—always round some frowning headland—until the hand has wearied of tugging at the oar, the eyes of watching the stars, the feet of listless beating in the ballast. Is it hard that it should be so? Not a whit; for who knows the exquisite gust of water save the man who has travelled many a mile athirst? Who values a couch on the soft turf under the beech trees at noonday but the man who has toiled afoot under the blazing sun, over league on league of parched plain? Who knows the true worth of the calm domestic hearth, the pure deep joy of little faces asleep in the cot, of a dear head

bending over its sewing as you look across the sacred home altar from your work—a dear head whose every additional silver hair is a golden chain to bind you, whose very evidences of decay make it more precious, like the diminished Sybilline books—who, I say, knows the true worth of these but the man or woman who has toiled, and striven, and struggled? The inhabitants of Arabia Felix —so said the old travellers—were obliged to burn goat's wool or pitch now and then to make their olfactories duly appreciative of the odorous atmosphere they always breathed, and therefore ceased to estimate. Why should men be so born to bliss that they feel it no more than they do—men of science only know how many—pounds of air pressing on every square inch of their bodies? We must suffer to be able to enjoy. We must work to be able to know what it is to win.

Alice and Marian had yet to learn all this; they had to serve their time to sorrow. Wherefore, ere the sun had quite kissed away all the beauty of the young year, while the undimmed glory of spring yet lived in the country, and even in smoky London some traces of its loveliness yet lingered, there came a change over their lives.

Henry Vorian was rapidly advancing towards a complete recovery. The pain and stiffness of his wounds had gone, and he was full of the rejuvenescence which springs of young love. A pleasant dream was drawing to its close, for the excuses for his delays in the nursery, for his invalid fancies, and Alice's nursing were not tenable for much longer. The time was fast approaching when that vision which he nourished of the approval of his parents was to be tested by stern reality.

In the meantime my lord and my lady, quite unconscious of what was passing, were anxiously desirous of their son's recovery, in order that he might be started for the great Orr prize, the pink-eyed heiress. No trainer ever watched with closer interest the approach of a young race-horse to the requisite form to warrant its starting for some great stake than they watched their son's returning health.

Marian's life was a dull desert, enlivened by those little oases, her Sunday meetings with the man she loved. As for him, having now, by dint of hard labour and some good fortune, attained a considerable distance along his course, he was waiting patiently,

lying on his oars until the slow barge of official obstructiveness would clear out of his way enough to let him push on. And that was not to be yet.

He knew the flagstones in Pall Mall intimately by this time. The very sentries had become familiar to him, and the messengers in the hall hardly took the trouble to look up as he passed. The clerks knew him and fled. His face was familiar as the type of a persistent and pertinacious grievance, and they, being quite unable to do anything to redress it, sought refuge in flight. That intricate building, which for the first few visits he believed no man would ever master the geography of, was as simple as a map of Kennington Common. He had the clue to this labyrinth in the unending story of his wrongs, and went about in the official rabbit warren without fear of being lost, as folks are sometimes lost in the catacombs. Well did Mr. Ledbitter know James Trefusis by this time, and well did every branch, and every clerk in every branch through which his case had passed on its tedious and tortuous way, know the face of James Trefusis.

They came to look upon him at last al-

most as one of themselves—a permanently appointed waiter on Government. They no longer racked their brains for excuses for delay. "His case was still under consideration." And so James called and called, week after week, on the various people with whom the paper was delayed until they got rid of it in the hopes of getting rid of him. Backwards and forwards, up stairs and down, he pursued that terrible bundle, which was now growing to formidable dimensions. For though he spent much of his time in beating at the doors of official dilatoriness, and was always on the spot to be questioned, the office languidly kept up a long correspondence with him—a long correspondence, which went on slowly revolving like a cyclone, but did not in the least clear the air. The reason of this was that the case was always falling into fresh hands; and the clerk who had to act on James's twenty-fifth letter, put to him some trivial question that had been put some twenty letters back by another clerk, and answered.

At last there came a time which brought a change to the four actors in this part of our story.

One warm summer Sunday, Alice and Marian met, and wandered hand-in-hand under the trees to their favourite seat, looking over the water. There they sat for some time—first in silence, and then talking over trivial things.

At length Alice broke the seal of secrecy which had so long locked up the story of her love.

"Min," she murmured, toying with the fringe of her parasol, and never raising her eyes, "what should you say if my king's son had at last come by?"

"What do you mean, dear?"

Alice did not answer, but she sang in a low voice a verse of the old ballad—

> The King his son rode through the street
> Where this fair maiden dwelt;
> At sight of her the heart did leap
> Beneath his jewelled belt.

"Is he a king's son, Alice?" asked Marian, laughingly.

"He is a hero—a prince," said the other, proudly.

"You do not mean that young officer about whom I have so often joked you?"

"Captain Henry Vorian, Marian!"

"Oh, darling, what will come of this? Reflect, my child, what can only come of this to you—shame, disgrace, dishonour!"

"You do not know him, Marian. He is a noble fellow, and loves me as a woman would be loved."

"But this is a clandestine attachment; nothing good can spring of it."

"Everything good will spring of it, Min. He is going to tell his father——"

"Worse and worse. To get your instant dismissal."

"Oh, no! He—who knows his parents best—believes they will not oppose him."

"Oh, this is childish dreaming, Alice; this is folly! Tell me how has all this come about."

Thereupon Alice related the whole history of her acquaintance with Henry Vorian—of his illness, and her care; of his love, and her return of affection.

Marian sighed. She had an instinctive terror of what must come of this, for she knew more of the world than Alice did, and was not to be deluded into believing that the Lord and Lady of Lacquoigne would quietly submit to their son's marriage with a penniless governess.

"Alice, darling, there must be an end at

once to the clandestine character of this attachment. You must break it off at once unless he tells his parents. Unless he does that, I tell you nothing but evil and mischief can come of it."

"He will tell them in good time."

"The only good time is now."

"Min, you are unreasonable."

"I am not indeed, dearest. It must be decided at once one way or the other. It shall be."

"It shall be?"

"Yes, for I will myself submit to all the pain and misery of divulging this to her ladyship rather than allow your name and honour to be imperilled."

"Why, Marian, what has come to you? I never saw you look like this. I never heard you speak so determinedly."

"I have never had such grave reason. Will you promise me that this secresy shall cease?"

"Oh, Marian, there is no harm in it."

"It is a breach of trust; it is also full of danger, to you, which you cannot see nor understand, darling; and therefore I am urgent with you. Do you promise?"

"I will tell Henry all you say."

"Will he do this?"

"I cannot tell."

"You say he is a man of honour, and loves you?"

Alice bowed her head.

"Then he will see this, and obey your slightest wish. You can promise he will?"

"Oh, Marian!"

"Will you promise? He will do it if you ask."

"Well, I promise then. Kiss me."

Marian kissed her very lovingly and tenderly, like a mother. The spoilt child woke in Alice's heart.

"Don't insist, Min. Let it be a little longer. You are so hard with me."

"For your good, child."

"Ah, when you are in love"—and then she noticed a sudden flush burn up in her sister's cheeks—"Why, Marian, has your king's son come, too?"

Marian's answer was a kiss, that said "Yes" plainly.

"Is *he* a king's son?"

"He is a king!" said Marian, proudly.

"Do I know him?"

"Yes; but hush—here comes an old friend of yours."

Alice looked up and saw James Trefusis coming towards them. Marian had told her that she had met with James, but said not a word of the result of that meeting. James had often hovered round the sisters at their trysting hour, waiting to escort Marian homeward, but he had never come up to them or spoken to them, at Marian's special request. Marian had a half dread of telling Alice where she had given her heart, though she could not explain the cause of the fear even to herself.

It had so happened that in the previous week James had been employed by an engineer, for whom he had done a good deal of work on his first arrival in town, to erect some machinery for a new company. One of the directors was a lord, who was of a mechanical turn of mind, and who, if he had not been encumbered with a coronet, might have made fame and fortune as an engineer. He was much struck with James's keen eye and thorough knowledge of his work, and was good enough to engage him in conversation. Of course no one could converse long with James before he was made acquainted with the gun grievance. And having heard it, my lord volunteered to

give James some notes of introduction to various influential members of Government, and most especially to the Secretary at War.

It was to bring her this good news that James ventured to break through Marian's orders.

When Alice saw and recognised him, the mystery of Marian's kingly lover was explained. As a child Marian had worshipped my hero as a king, and Alice divined all.

"Oho! Min, so the king's son is coming indeed. God bless you, dear, and make you happy."

"Hush, child, hush!"

By this time James had reached the place where they were sitting. After shaking hands and chatting a little while with Alice, keeping, nevertheless, his eyes all the time fixed on Marian, he told the story of his meeting with the kind nobleman, and began to indulge in dreams about his gun.

So these three sat talking and dreaming until the hour had come for Alice to return to Mayfair. James, at a look from Marian, offered to accompany her, and she accepted his escort, for she wanted to question him about his attachment to her sister.

When they were gone, Marian sat awhile

pondering over what Alice had told her. A vague presentiment of ill hung over her, and now that she was alone, the evening air seemed to grow chill and damp.

She rose and wandered away towards home. As she passed a shrubbery she fancied she heard a low moan. It frightened her—she listened. Then she detected a feeble whimpering, and recognised the voice as that of a child. "Some little thing that has lost its way," she said to herself, as she walked up to the rails, and looked among the shrubs to discover it.

Presently she saw a little girl clothed in rags, lying huddled together under one of the bushes, moaning faintly. The poor little thing was evidently ill. Marian knelt down beside her, and spoke to her kindly. Perhaps such a tone was unfamiliar—it is very possible—but at any rate the child made no answer, only shrank together more, and complained less audibly.

Marian looked round—there was no one in sight. What was to be done? The park-keepers were no doubt deeply absorbed in conversations with the rosy-cheeked servant girls wherewith the park abounds of a summer Sunday evening. She had

little time to spare, but she could not leave the poor creature there. She stooped over it as tenderly as possible, and lifted it in her arms. The child was so thin, it was scarcely any weight—and luckily; for poor Marian was far from strong, and was tired enough ere she reached the hospital, which she fortunately remembered was not far from the park.

People who met her in the street stared a little to see so respectable a girl carrying so ragged a child; but in London every one is too busy to attend much to such occurrences as this, so that Marian reached the hospital attended only by a few of those ragged urchins who seemed to spring from the ground the moment an accident or anything of the kind happens in London.

As she approached the door of the hospital the Abbey clock struck the hour at which by rights she should have been back at the Orr's.

There was not a moment to lose. She gave the child to the porter, explained in a few hurried words where and how she had found the little sufferer, and was gone before the astonished functionary had quite recovered his senses.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW MINUTES' CONVERSATION IN THE LIBRARY.

"MY own darling Alice!—Thank goodness, those blessed young 'uns are out of the room."

"Fie, you naughty boy! How late you are. They've breakfasted hours ago."

"Oh, yes. I've just done my egg and cup of tea in solitary grandeur; and then rushed up to see you."

And so the young people embraced.

But just as Henry Vorian was pressing one of Alice's golden curls to his lips, there came a tap at the school-room door.

"Come in!" shouted the Captain, savagely.

The door opened, and Thomas put his calm visage into the room.

"Please sir, my lud, sir, would be 'appy to speak a few words with you in the libery."

"Tell his lordship I'll be there immediately."

Thomas placidly withdrew.

"By Jove, rather a narrow escape!" said Henry Verian, as the footman disappeared.

The two lovers were, you may be certain, a little disturbed at this summons. They imagined at once that their secret had been discovered. And although they had determined to reveal it themselves some day, they felt that being found out instead of making a confession was likely to tell against them.

They looked foolish enough, poor things! When you thrust aside the ivy and peep into [illegible] that has been so closely con- [illegible]

[illegible]

would enable her to confide her own little affection to him. It is astonishing—for what is called a shy and retiring passion—how much Love tends to make its victims garrulous. If you have a taciturn friend, you can set him babbling in a minute by pulling out the affection-stop of that hitherto mute organ—his heart.

Alice then had listened to James's story with eager attention—the eagerness due rather to her anxiety for him to bring his story to an end than from any doubt of how it would end.

And when he had finished his revelation, she told him the tale of her attachment. He listened to it as a brother should listen to such a recital from a sister, and he looked very grave; for he, like Marian, saw what might be the result of the unfortunate difference between Alice and Henry Vorian. With some timidity, for he had not quite shaken off towards the younger sister as he had, towards the elder thanks to that splendid republican, Love,—the feeling of inferiority of birth and position which was the heritage of his youth—with some timidity and no small difficulty, never having had sisters of his own to advise, he

impressed on Alice the same counsel which Marian had given her, and entreated her to follow it.

"Let there be no concealment; better separation than shame; better despair than disgrace"—such was the moral honest James tried nervously, and with much hesitation of speech, to urge upon Alice.

But in spite of the nervousness and hesitation, there was so much unmistakable earnestness in his advice, that Alice was persuaded that he and Marian must be right. She made up her mind, therefore, to implore her lover, when she saw him again, to reveal their attachment to his father.

Unfortunately, Henry Vorian was away for a day or two; and when he did return, on the Wednesday night, was so tired that he was not visible till late on Thursday. He had been at Mr. Orr's country house, where Mrs. and Miss Orr had spent a week to entertain him. How hard he had tried to beg off the infliction, I need not tell you. But he was getting better and stronger now, and the doctor had given directions—as unwitting of the mischief he was doing in this case as when he prescribed Alice's

reading—that he should be taken out, and enlivened. He was "worrying about something or another, that was clear, and wanted rousing."

My lady, therefore, for this and other reasons, had insisted on her son's going to the Orrs'. As for my lord, he had no idea of a man's suffering anxiety—or, as the doctor called it, worrying himself—about a love affair. The only thing he could think of as likely to trouble him was money.

This shrewd nobleman never inquired about his son's pecuniary position, for fear he should be invited to help him out of difficulties. With a vivid recollection of his own youth, he avoided asking any questions about Henry's doings; though I doubt not, as he looked at the young fellow's careful face across the table at breakfast, he calculated how many *post obits* had taxed his son's filial affection.

With no idea of any other thorn in the side save straitened means, Lord Lacquoigne came to the opinion that Henry had got over head and ears in debt. The next question was how to extricate him—of course without paying for him, if possible.

Naturally, the first scheme which pre-

sented itself to the not over-brilliant mental powers of the nobleman was a wealthy marriage. And from the notion of the marriage to the idea of the marriage with Miss Orr was so easy a step, that my lord was hardly exhausted even then by the intellectual effort, but had enough energy left to make up his mind to send for his son and suggest this ingenious plan to him.

Accordingly, Thomas was summoned to the "libery," and bidden to ask Captain Vorian to be good enough to give his father a few minutes' conversation.

How Thomas arrived just as the lovers met after their short separation, and just as Alice was about to tell Henry to inform his parents of their attachment, my readers know.

When Henry Vorian talked about "a narrow escape," he applied the term to himself and Alice. It would have better suited the astute Thomas. For that worthy, on reaching the school-room, had applied his eye to the keyhole ere he applied his knuckles to the panel; and in consequence of seeing the affectionate terms on which the captain and the governess were, he had delayed the latter operation somewhat. "The narrow escape,"

then, was his; for had Henry Vorian chanced to catch him at his interesting occupation, he would certainly, with his sound leg, have kicked him so thoroughly downstairs, that his descent would probably have only concluded on the mat in the hall.

I'm not sure—and never shall be—whether the convenience of having some one to brush your clothes, black your shoes, and cook your dinner, can ever quite repay you for the constant surveillance exercised over you by your so-called servants. It is not that one does anything criminal, but there are so many, many things—little economies, passing pressures, domestic differences, and family troubles—which one would rather go through without spectators, and especially without such indifferent and incapable critics. Every man acts a domestic drama—only, instead of going on the stage and letting the public pay him, he hires audiences at terms varying from nine to fifty pounds per annum, according to their position—whether they go into the gallery or pit as kitchenmaids and housemaids, or take a private bin—I mean box—as butler.

Thomas went down into the kitchen—my lady always spoke of it as "the servants'

hall"—and described what he had seen, illustrating his meaning by putting his arm round the housemaid's waist and attempting to kiss her, a liberty which she resented, not so much because she objected to it, as that Thomas being on the eve of departure, it was as well to be "off" with him, in accordance with the old maxim, in order to be better prepared to be "on with the new" footman.

I have been digressing somewhat. But you must please to consider the digressions as artistic—descriptive music, in short, indicating the hesitation with which Henry Vorian descended to the library to this dreaded interview with his noble father.

On entering the room, however, he was rather relieved to find his father unusually agreeable.

"Sit down, Harry; sit down. How are you? Better I can see; but not well, eh?"

The captain admitted that there had been periods of his existence when his health had been less a source of anxiety.

"Ah, I can see! Fact is, my dear boy, you are worrying. The doctor says so; and, you know, Pelligue is the deuce and all to find out what's the matter. Bless you, he told me the other day that he was attending

Lady Someone—wouldn't tell her name for worlds. She had baffled all the best men of the day—couldn't find out what was the matter, not they! Egad, the first time he saw her he twigged it. The old girl was given to drink. She couldn't take spirits, because of the servants; so what do you think she did? Got quietly screwed of a night with Eau de Cologne. She did, by Jove; and he guessed it. Clever beggar, that Pelligue!"

Henry Vorian smiled in a somewhat sickly manner, not having quite recovered his spirits yet, and said "he at all events was not ill on that account. He didn't take Eau de Cologne."

"No, no! Of course not," said my lord, quite lively and pleasant at the notion of having told a funny story well. "It's another sort of 'owe' with you;" and then he laughed consumedly. "Egad—do you see it? Doosed good, by Jove. I must remember that; it would do for *Punch*. I'll tell some of those literary fellows one meets at Lady Fubsby's, and tell 'em to put it in."

Henry Vorian laughed, but his laugh was no more successful than his smile.

"Well, Harry, when a good-looking, well-

born young fellow like you gets a little hard up, he must marry."

Henry murmured his assent, not in the least expecting what was coming next.

"You young fellows now-a-days have infinite advantages over us old fellows—I mean over what we old fellows had in our days. Doose a bit of finding out then what a girl was really worth—not a bit of it. But now you've only to keep your eyes about you, and what with the 'wills and bequests' in the *London News* and the papers generally, it is uncommonly hard if a fellow who is looking out for that sort of thing can't find which girl is best worth keeping an eye on. I needly hardly tell you, Henry," his lordship said, becoming serious all at once at the recollection, "that when I married your mother I supposed she was considerably better off than she was. Don't you do the same thing!"

His lordship paused for a moment, as if expecting his son to make the most solemn promises to obey him; but Henry had no such intention, although, strictly speaking, he might have done so with perfect safety, because my lord, being a nobleman, was not called on to be grammatical, and had merely

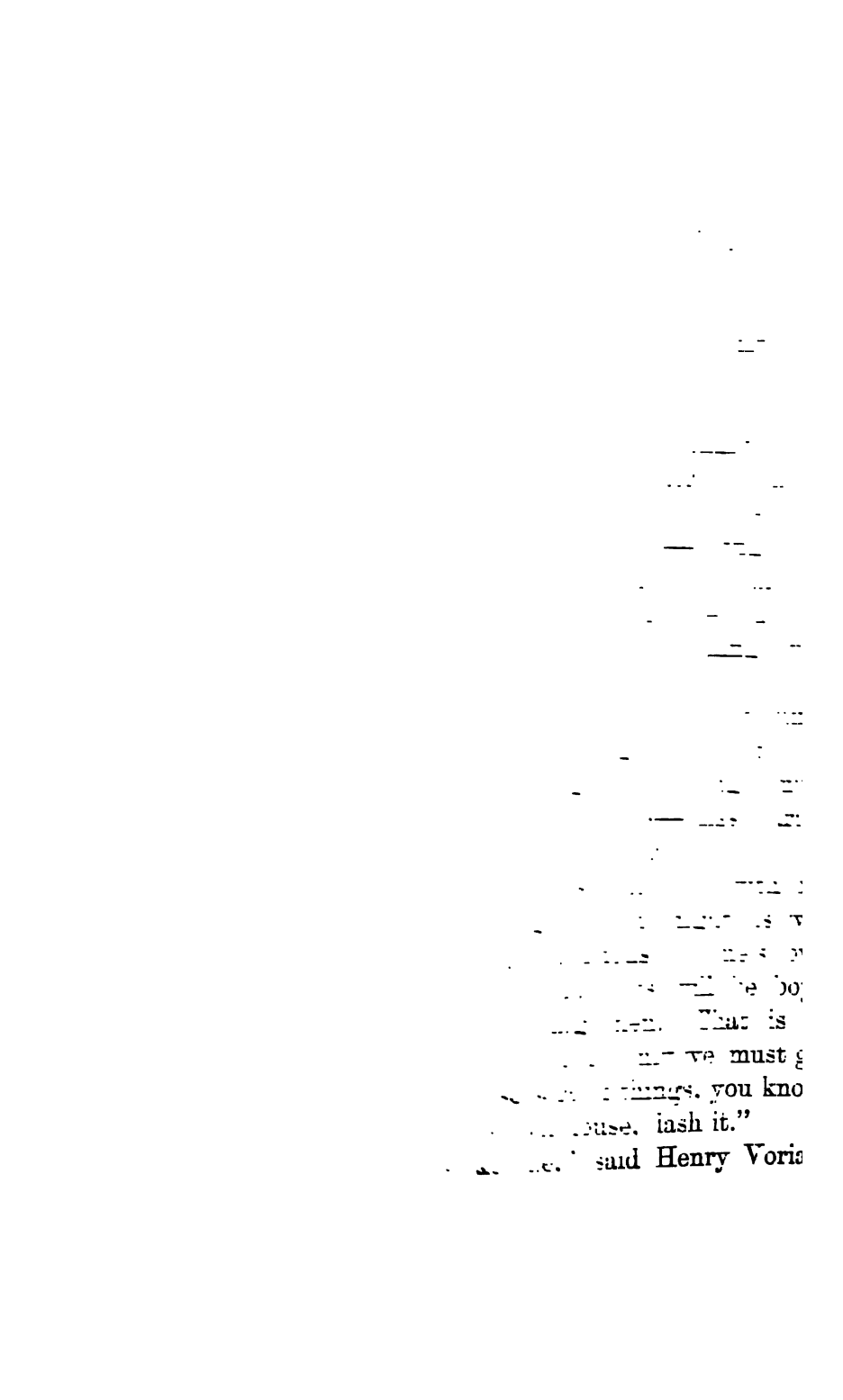
required of his son—in so many words—not to marry his mother!

As, however, Henry did not speak, his father continued in a grave voice.

"I feel quite sure, although I have not asked you, and do not intend to—pray understand that—I have no intention to invite your confidence in the matter"—he was dreadfully afraid his son would tell him all, and ask his aid,—"but I feel quite sure you are heavily involved in debt. You must be perfectly aware that I cannot assist. I have your brothers and sisters to provide for, while you will have the title and estates. You must see that I have enough to do to look after their interests; and that anxiety"—here my lord's brow became knitted—"is no mean one, for the hope I once entertained of obtaining the boys some Government appointments is daily growing less promising, thanks to those confounded Radicals, and the ridiculous 'retrenchment and reform' mania. Egad, before long there will be nothing for a poor nobleman to do with his sons!"

The captain declared this was too bad.

"Too bad! I think it's cursed revolutionary! But it can't be helped; so you


must g
you kno
lash it."
said Henry Voris

...e clearly and distinctly now,
...s father's mode of speaking of
... ...ent; "the love I entertain for
... is honourable, if hitherto it has
...aled from you, sir. That lady is to
... and therefore I shall feel obliged
...l speak of her with respect."

... Lacquoigne was horror-struck. The
...d never had the audacity to turn in
...ay before, and as he stood panting,
...with fear, half with rage, he terrified his
... ...r; but my lord was blessed with some
...esence of mind, and to conceal his alarm
...e began to bluster.

"Curse me, sir! what do you mean? Have you been such an idiotic fool that you have laid your name and your debts at the feet of that common penniless little devil. Confound her doll face! I said to my lady she was too doocedly pretty, and thought if you were at home you might be tempted to play the fool; but, by Jove, sir, the idea of this insane, disobedient, blackguardly conduct exceeds everything. What the doose will your mother say, sir, do you think?"

Henry ventured to hope that his mother would rather learn that her son was an honourable man than a villain.

"Villain be hanged, sir! Is it honourable to pay your addresses to your mother's governess on the sly, and offer to marry her without your parents' consent? Get out of my sight, you low, unworthy fellow! Get out! Go away—only, by Jove, sir, if you go near that infernal school-room, where that designing little devil is, I'll have you and her both turned out of the house neck and crop. Don't answer me, sir! Hold your tongue. Go to your own room, and don't let me see you until you have recovered your senses."

And my lord looked so much as if he himself were out of his senses, and gnashed his teeth so furiously, that Henry was glad enough to slip out of the room and sneak upstairs; and he hadn't the courage to brave his father's anger by going to the school-room, although he knew that Alice would be dying to hear what had passed between them. So he sat down and wrote a letter to her, which he took out and posted. It contained a short, passionate description of his father's treatment of him, and a warm avowal of his unchanged and unchangeable affection for her. Finally, he said, to prove that he fully intended to keep his word, he recorded therein, in black and white, his promise to

marry her; and bade her, if ever he swerved from his honest purpose, make any use she chose of that testimony to punish him and his family.

When Henry left the room, my lord rang the bell, and told Thomas to inform her ladyship that her presence was required in the library. Her ladyship accordingly came rustling down in a very old brown silk dress from her "boudoir," where she was superintending a couple of very overworked and underpaid needlewomen, whom she employed to work for her in order to save on her milliner's bill. She made a point of superintending their labours in person for fear they should idle and talk.

You may readily imagine what my lady said and how she looked when the noble lord told her of her son's doings and intentions. Her eyes got as hard and cruel as a pair of red-hot pincers, and her nose (that aristocratic organ would have turned up in scorn at the notion of her son's marrying a common governess, had it been capable of such vulgarity) got so sharp, it seemed as if it must cleave through the integument stretched over its bony ridge.

She was not two minutes in deciding on

the right course to pursue. Henry was confined to his room by my lord's orders, and the governess must be dismissed. Unluckily the governess was entitled to a quarter's notice or a quarter's salary. Notice was out of the question, and the salary was not forthcoming. What was to be done? My lord must go off instanter to Mr. Scrooby, his lawyer, and get a loan from him. In the meantime she would keep strict watch on Henry, and prevent him from seeing or communicating with Alice, who was to be sent off the very moment my lord returned from the city. It so happened, however, that Mr. Scrooby was not in when my lord arrived at his office, so the money was not procurable. But his lordship left him a note requesting him to send it the first thing in the morning.

That night two people slept ill in that house—Henry Vorian, and Alice, who could not understand why she had not seen her lover. My lord and my lady, as became people with good consciences, slumbered calmly!

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE TREFUSIS GUN NEARLY WENT OFF.

"HANG it all, captain," said James one morning, springing up from his seat by the window, whence he had watched the postman, and seen him pass the door without delivering the long-expected official missive; "hang it all! I can't stand this any longer; I'll go and wake up the Seven Sleepers at the Ordnance Office."

"Humph! You won't get much by it," growled the old soldier, who was poring over a new treatise on artillery.

"It will let off the steam, at any rate."

Accordingly, James once more visited the Ordnance Office. He had not been there for some time, and had almost passed from the official memory.

As he entered the hall, it suddenly occurred to him that he had left all the correspondence on the subject of his gun behind him at his

lodgings. He paused, wondering whether it would be any use to attempt to bring the official mind to a recognition of him without these credentials. A messenger, of magnificent appearance, probably ex-valet of some past Secretary of State, stept forward condescendingly.

"Do you wish to see any one, sir?"

"Yes," James answered, hardly knowing what he answered, for he was still debating within himself.

"Is it one of the clerks, sir, or one of the gentlemen in the hall?" asked the other, meaning, by that last elegant periphrasis, the messengers.

James explained that he knew where to go and whom to see; whereupon the man, with just a flavour of offended dignity, returned to his *Times*.

"Well! In for a penny in for a pound—I've come so far, so I'll just go and chance it," said James to himself, and so he wound his devious way to Mr. Ledbitter's room, and knocked at the door.

"*Come* in!" roared the occupant, emphatically; whereupon James entered. Mr. Ledbitter was sitting astride a chair, with his arms on the back, another chair opposite

to him being occupied in a similar manner by a highly attired swell, with a geranium in his button-hole and the knob of his cane in his mouth. Mr. Ledbitter bade James be seated, indicating a chair on the other side of the room, and continued his conversation with the sucking swell.

At first James supposed this conversation was of a business nature, and was rather astonished at the free and easy position in which it was being discussed. Presently, however, Mr. Ledbitter, unconsciously raising his voice above the low tone in which he talked when first James came in, began to become audible.

——"As for Jack Simpson, he took a little more cold fowl than was good for him, I should say, for he 'went on dreffle' with the eldest of the Piminy girls. You know 'em, don't you? Mother designing old gal; father a half-pay Indian officer; was in the Company's Artillery, I think—girls rather nice, but always on the hook. Gad, I guess Master Jack has got a barb in his gills; he'll have the old chap after him before long—ask intentions. Law bless you! pistols in a moment, if Jack cries off at all—trifling—daughters of an old soldier, sir—held a com-

mission—served country—all that sort of thing, eh? Well, coming back, Tom Fitzgerald, who can't drive a bit, got on the box-seat, and he and the driver both being just nicely screwed, he persuaded the chap to let him take the ribbons. Hadn't gone far—just turn of the road—well, you know where the open green is, before you come to those tall houses. About a hundred yards this side of that, where the ditch crosses the road—you know. Well, just there turned too sharp—over we go—regular smash. Had to get a farmer somewhere near to let us put the horses into a couple of his carts, and take the girls home—doosid jolly. Old people as crusty as thirty-four port, and Laura Danson with a sprained ankle—couldn't waltz for weeks. Doosid stoopid of Fitzgerald, wasn't it? Just like those confounded Irish."

In this amusing strain Mr. Ledbitter flowed on for about a quarter of an hour, when his friend, who had been suppressing yawns in the crown of his hat for some time past, suddenly recollected that he had a pressing engagement, and took advantage of a semicolon in Mr. L.'s long-winded narrative to cut it short, and take his leave.

Mr. Ledbitter then awoke to the fact of James's presence. He made no apology for keeping him, and was by no means amiable, having no doubt been a little put out by his friend's abrupt suppression of the rest of his anecdote. I think, for one short minute, he had half a mind to finish his story to James, but the idea was immediately quelled.

"Well, what can I do for you, sir?"

"I have called about that gun, sir——"

"Gun!—gun!—what gun?"

"I think you will remember; I saw you about three weeks ago on the subject."

"Are you quite sure it was me?"

"Oh, yes, perfectly; I came here first while you had my case under consideration, and have been several times since."

"Oh, what is it about?"

"About a newly-invented gun."

"Ah, yes. To be sure. Mr. Clarkson? Yes, yes, of course. Well, your case is still under consideration."

"My name is not Clarkson—it is Trefusis."

"Yes, exactly, that was what I meant. Your case will not be decided just yet. You see, the fact is, we cannot ascertain whether any one had pointed out that flaw in the gun when it was delivered. Now it has——"

"I think you must be speaking of another application. I merely sent the drawings and specifications of a newly-invented mode of rifling."

"Now, who could have sent you here, then? That's nothing to do with me. You should have been sent to Mr. Sanders."

James explained that he had had several interviews already with Mr. Ledbitter on the subject, in whose hands he had actually seen the papers.

"Oh, yes, to be sure. But that's all altered now. That sort of work has been taken from this branch, and is Mr. Sanders's business now. Look here!—You'd better go and see Sanders."

James made a futile attempt to recall his case to Mr. Ledbitter's recollection, and learn the latest steps taken. But that gentleman having been put on fresh work, his mind was like a clean slate, without a trace of his late labours on it.

Without much difficulty James made his way to Mr. Sanders's room, and knocked at the door. No answer. He knocked again still louder. Still no answer. At a third smart tap, however, an angry voice told him to "come in." He found a little grey-

headed gentleman sitting in an easy chair, reading the paper. The little gentleman had a red face, and apparently a ready temper, for he snapped out something about "keeping on tapping," and "we don't sit in our shirt sleeves," and "why can't you come in at once, instead of tap-tap-tapping, like a cursed woodpecker?"

James laid his case before Mr. Sanders, and begged that gentleman to tell him what was being done. That gentleman was evidently a mere Civil Service shepherd, who looked after a select flock of clerks, and did nothing. He told James he could give him no assistance, but Mr. Tattifer, in the next room but one, might help him.

Mr. Tattifer's room having been discovered, James acted on the experience he had acquired of Mr. Saunders, and walked into the room without knocking. The looks he met with were not of a kind calculated to encourage an attempt to repeat the manœuvre. Two gentlemen were looking out of a window into the street, commenting, no doubt, on the wealth and fashion rolling by. A third was reading *Punch*, with his feet gracefully stuck up, Yankee fashion, on his desk. A fourth was washing his hands and

preparing to go out for a little stroll, with which view he had a little nosegay for his button-hole refreshing itself in an inkstand glass filled with water. When James entered there was a general scuttle to places —terribly undignified, but the young men were under the impression that it was Mr. Sanders who was coming to pay them a visit.

Mr. Tattifer having brought his heels to their normal state of being lower than his head, laid *Punch* aside, and asked James his business, in a stern and rather ill-tempered voice. James once more explained his errand. Mr. Tattifer asked Mr. Spring to step this way. Mr. Spring had been one of those James found looking on the outer world through the plate-glass. He dispensed a stale fragrance of tobacco smoke, which appeared to have penetrated his brain, so foggy was he.

"Oh, ah. Well, the ah—gun, you see. The ah—fact is that"—Here he looked up at the ceiling, knitting his brows, in search, perhaps, of the rest of the sentence, which was not forthcoming, however. "The—the —ah—Lord Parmenter—the—ah—Under-Secretary was—ah. The case was—ah—still under consideration."

Could Mr. Spring inform James how far the case had got?

"Have you made yourself thoroughly master of it, Mr. Spring?" chimed in Mr. Tattifer, who seemed a little afraid that his subordinate might commit himself.

"Why, the—ah. Mr. Smith—ah. That is—ah. The Inspector of guns—ah—of ordnance. Ah—Inspector of Ordnance—had—ah—reported upon—had—ah—recommended its trial."

James was delighted. How soon would he be informed of this officially? Mr. Spring and Mr. Tattifer both opened their eyes languidly, and stared at him. The former gentleman said that it was quite possible that the higher authorities would disagree with the Inspector's opinions. "What would be done, then?" Oh, the Inspector would probably have the papers back, and would withdraw the suggestion. "Had Mr. Spring the papers by him?" Mr. Spring was quite unable to say. He had had them at some time or other, but found it quite impossible to fix a date. Finally, by a reference to the book, of which, in the absence of the young gentleman who had gone to take his geranium for a stroll, the combined efforts of

the remaining clerks were barely successful in making anything, it was discovered that the papers had been sent to the Private Secretary that morning.

James determined to put a bold face on it, and go to the Private Secretary direct. Accordingly, after a little searching, and no slight risk of losing himself, he at length made his way to a small but very comfortable apartment, where a young gentleman, who turned out to be the Private Secretary, was busily employed in writing letters. Probably owing to his having so much intercourse with the outer world, he was far more agreeable and communicative than any of the other officials with whom James had come into contact.

After a few fruitless plunges into a basket full of big bundles of official papers, the Private Secretary at last succeeded in finding those connected with James's invention. As he turned them over, James caught sight of a note from his friend, my lord the Director. It was dated a few days back; and James saw on the paper—with the same date—a minute which, to judge from the letters on which he was engaged, had been written by the Private Secretary. The minute was short, and to the purpose:—

L. of O.

The Secretary of State wishes to have this case reported upon immediately.

CHARLES VERE.

The effect of the noble Director's note was evident. The Secretary of State had nudged the Private Secretary, the Private Secretary had nudged the Inspector of Ordnance, the Inspector of Ordnance had nudged the Assistant Inspector of Ordnance, and the Assistant Inspector of Ordnance had nudged the clerks under him; and so they all woke up for about the space of an hour, and James's case made more progress in that time than it had done in a whole year before.

The Private Secretary—become, if possible, more civil and obliging since his perusal of my lord's letter—explained to James that if the Inspector's report were acted upon, he (James Trefusis) would be expected to supply a certain number of guns, and pay all the expenses of the experiment.

This was not very encouraging; but still it was something to obtain even thus much. James thanked the Private Secretary, and hurried off home, where he made the best of

it—though how he was to get the money to pay for all this was a question he could not solve. But he put a good face on the matter, and roasted the old captain unmercifully about his prophecy of the everlasting non-recognition of the invention.

"Wait, and see," said the old gentleman; "wait, and see. There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip."

"And many a one 'twixt success and the gun," rhymed Charlie Crawhall, who had dropped in.

But James only laughed, and called them a brace of croakers.

The next morning but one, however, there arrived a long official envelope, with the superscription, "On Her Majesty's Service." James opened it, and began to read the letter eagerly. But he had not gone far ere a blank expression came over his face, which told the old captain that something had gone wrong.

The writer of the letter (signature illegible, as before) was directed (as usual) to state that the plan for rifling ordnance on a new principle had been submitted in the proper quarter, and that, he regretted to add, it could not be entertained.

This was so very different from what James had been led to expect, that he was utterly dumbfoundered. He did not know what on earth to do. Finally, he went off to his friend, "the noble Director," and laid the case before him. His lordship explained it all in a few minutes.

Some fortunate inventor, who was blessed with a four hundred horse-power of ear-wigging, had managed to get his little scheme decided on without any examination of its merits in comparison with those of other new guns. He had so many friends in high quarters that it was impossible for any one to make a better gun; and accordingly it was promulgated officially that all other schemes were to be knocked on the head instanter.

"But what will be the end of this?" asked James. "They must find out he is not the best man some day or other."

"Oh," said his friend, "then they'll knight him, or something of that sort; and perhaps they may leave off making his guns, or perhaps they mayn't. Anyhow, the rival who explodes his pretensions won't benefit by it. So, don't try it, Mr. Trefusis."

And Mr. Trefusis didn't try it.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT MARIAN BROUGHT BACK FROM THE HOSPITAL.

WHEN she had left the poor little waif at the hospital, Marian had to hurry away as fast as she could to Grosvenor Place. Luckily, Mrs. Orr was in the country, so a few minutes did not matter particularly; but she dreaded being very late even in that lady's absence, because Mrs. Pincher was certain to report her failure in punctuality.

It was a sultry, heavy day, with occasional big drops—"the pride of the morning," as they call such intermittent rain in the country. Every now and then the sun came out, but it was with a pale watery gleam, as if the heat were too great even for him.

Poor Marian, hastening home, became very warm, what with nervousness and what with hurry, and was almost ready to faint when she reached the inhospitable door of the Orr

mansion. She was admitted, under protest, by one of the canary-coloured footmen, who seemed to think that a governess, like the milk, ought to come through the area, if not through a hole in the pavement, like the coals.

Holding firmly by the banisters, Marian mounted her social treadmill of innumerable stairs, and climbed painfully to her nursery. She was very weary long ere she reached the top, and could have seated herself half-way, and fallen asleep with intense relief; but she strung up her nerves and toiled on. By a strong effort of will she compelled herself to walk with a show of firmness into the nursery, and take her usual seat at the table.

It was the fashion at the Orrs to make every one of the household feel, as much as possible, that the seventh day of the week was Sunday—and by Sunday I don't mean you to understand a day of rest. Mrs. Orr was accustomed, it is true, to speak of the day as one of rest; but it was nothing of the sort. Was it rest to Mr. Orr, who was comfortable enough washing his hands in gold in his office in the city, but nothing of the sort when sitting up in state receiving

visitors on Sunday afternoons? As for the servants, they were set to eat up all the old scraps—on religious grounds. Although it was a "work of necessity" that Mr. and Mrs. Orr should have a hot dinner, it would have been a grievous sin to have one in the kitchen. And there were callers, and much going to church, so that Sunday was no holiday for the Orr domestics.

The children, although they were less children than living miniatures of their parents, were not inclined to regard Sunday as a day of rest, for they had an extra allowance of catechism, collect, and hymn to learn, and the only recreation they were allowed to indulge in was the perusal of tracts and those dreariest of all dreary things, "good books"—so good that they were never seen except once a week. What a funny notion it is that people like the Orrs have! They think, because a book is good, it must never be read except on Sunday; but then, to be sure, the class of publications to which they award the epithet is so peculiar that it would have no chance of perusal at all, except on a day when every other kind of reading is strictly prohibited, and studious people become the Robinson

Crusoes of literature, ready to devour anything they can pick up.

In accordance with the laws of the house, the children had had heavy lessons set them, which were not considered work, as being of a religious character. They were to say them to Marian in the afternoon, and she ought to have been prepared to hear them now, as soon as she came back. With this intention she took her usual seat at the table, and called Algernon and Alicia to her.

"Do you know, Miss Carlyle," said Algernon, who had been counting his money in the corner, and was cross at being disturbed in that high-minded amusement, "do you know it's half an hour after the proper time?"

"Yes, my dear," said Marian quietly.

"Ah, well, mamma would not like your stopping out——"

"Just because her back is turned," said the amiable Alicia, *sotto voce.*

Marian was not one to allow her pupils to be impudent. She checked Master Algernon smartly, and administered a severe lecture to him and his sister, to which they listened with stolid indifference—Algernon with one

hand in his pocket, counting his wealth furtively.

There was a terrible aching in poor Marian's head, and she felt very confused, so that Alicia and Algernon had rather a fine time of it, confounding their "duty towards their neighbour" with what their godfathers and godmothers did promise in their name in a way that would have edified their governess, had she been conscious of it.

How delighted she was when the weary lessons were done, and the children had their suppers, of bread and milk, and retired to bed, after an animated discussion as to whether the little Todmordens, with whom they had played in the Park on the last Saturday afternoon, had a papa as rich as their papa, and whether the Todmordens' mamma had as many dresses and as much jewellery as their mamma. Dear children!

"I shall tell ma about Miss Carlyle's stopping out so long, Lizzy. Shan't you?" said Algernon, that amiable boy.

"Oh, yes! and how she heard us our lessons. I said the hymn that I learnt last Sunday, and she didn't know it again," said the delighted Alicia.

"Look here, Alicia—I'll give you my four-

penny-piece if you'll let me tell ma first. You may tell Mrs. Pincher if you like—but you must give me a penny back if you do."

"Oh, yes! and ma'll give you sixpence for being a good boy, and I shall only get a piece of bread and jam from Pincher."

"Well, if ma does give me sixpence, I'll give you a penny more. There!" said the very son of Mr. Orr. And so the bargain was struck, for these nice young people were educated by their mother to keep up a system of *espionage* on all the household, and were rewarded for telling tales; wherefore the businesslike brats made their bargains, and even, when in want of a little money, laid their heads together to invent little stories, which, by dint of supporting one another in the details, they contrived to pass off as real. It was in so many words a forgery. They were signing Truth's name to cheques for the small sum of sixpence. It was the result of their education, if not of their parentage.

What would Mr. Orr have said had he found his son guilty of such conduct—of forgery, flat forgery?

Well, I really cannot say. But, mind, this is to be regarded as a privileged communication.

When the delightful children were gone to bed, Marian flung up the nursery window, and sat by it in the hope of finding cool comfort in the night-breeze. The day, as I have told you, had been one of the quiet sweltering days, when human nature is fit for little save being bottled off, and put away in cool bins. The night was as dense and dull and oppressive as the day. The lurid light of the great city seemed to steam up into the sky, and make the night yet closer and heavier.

Marian leant her aching brow on the window-sill, and prayed for relief. A fearful weight seemed pressing on her brain, and invisible fetters loaded her limbs. She had not even strength and energy enough to wipe away the big burning tears that overflowed her lids, and dropped, searing, down her cheeks.

The end of candle in the candlestick burnt down, flared, and died away; and Marian watched it, too feeble and sick and weary to care about it, though it would oblige her to go to bed in the dark—Mrs. Pincher doling out only a modicum of tallow to each of the servants—including Miss Carlyle, the governess, among them.

There was nothing in the shape of light left save the quaint parallelogram flung on the dark ceiling by the gas lamp in the street below. It seemed to her eyes, dim with pain and haunted with feverish fancies, a great golden board whereon the future was written in a strange hieroglyphic which she could not decipher. Slowly, by degrees, it grew more and more intense, and seemed to come nearer and nearer. It made her nervous. So, after a while, she rose, made her way to her room, and went to bed.

The sultry night accomplished its destiny. When Marian had closed her eyes—which was not until such time as her aching brain began to confuse the sights and sounds of the midnight with her feverish waking dreams, so that she lay for a time in a species of swoon between reality and sleep — there flashed across the thick curtain of night a faint blue gleam. A low murmur followed, like a great lion rousing from his slumber. In another minute a second flash followed—this time writing with rapid hand a lurid izzard on the black sky. And then came the voice of the nearer monster. Before long, with a hiss like an advancing army of serpents, the veil of rain—rapid, heavy, and continuous—swept

up from the distance. Loud lashed its pelting showers against the pane. But louder now the unmistakable thunder growled and echoed. Furiously the blue lightning zigzagged, like fiery serpents, across the inky vault.

It was a terrific storm. The oppressive lull of the evening had heralded it fitly. It was as fierce and fast and furious as its precursor was dull and dense and depressing.

It did not wake Marian, however. But its voice reached her sleeping ear, and mingled with her dreams.

She dreamt she was in a little rudderless boat, adrift on the vast Atlantic that tumbles in on the inhospitable coast of Bude. As a child she had spent some weeks on the north coast of Cornwall, and its rugged majestic scenery rose before her again now. Backward and forward on the breakers that beat on the shore the little boat rocked and tossed. Now it was poised on the crest of some tall combing wave, that burst presently upon the shrieking beach with a wild roar, borrowed of the thunder. Yet the boat did not touch the land; some occult power seemed to hurl it back as it was dashing on the shingle. And then the back-beat of the white shattered breaker would whirl it out, until another

wave, with monstrous back, would heave beneath it, and bear it hissing—like the rain—back toward the beach, on which it was to burst anon with the hollow, vibrating boom so like the thunder.

Towards morning, the storm had wearied itself out and fled away, grumbling at times like a defeated giant. And then the earth, sending up its rich fat incense after the libation, rejoicing at the blessing which the seeming curse had brought with it. All green things were refreshed by the copious bounty of the rain; and the smoke and soot of London being washed off into the inky gutters, poor prisoner Nature in the squares and parks put on a gay aspect for awhile, until all the birds began to twitter and chirp with surprise at the alteration in her appearance.

When day returned, it found the world improved and beautified, and all things rejoicing. Only through poor Marian's window the pure cool dawn peeped fruitlessly. In vain the fresh breath of the morning fanned softly on the pane for her.

She woke—with what a burning thirst, yet with what a disinclination to move, to get up, and drink. She drowsed off, and, drowsing, she dreamt her desire accomplished, and

seemed to sit by a delicious stream, and dip up the cool wave in the white cup of a lily. But the vision scattered, and the thirst was unquenched.

She staggered out of bed at last, and, pouring the water out of her carafe into the tumbler, gulped it down greedily. It could not appease that fierce drought. And how heavy and weary was her aching head! It throbbed and beat, and seemed as if it must part, so horribly did the pain appear to swell in it.

A minute ago she was so burning hot when she groped her way towards the water-bottle. Now, she was shivering until the very bed shook with it. And yet she was not cold; on the contrary, her blood seemed like a living flame coursing through her veins, and her flesh was like a burning coal.

She sat up for a while, in the vain hope of finding ease. She felt such a nausea, and her head swam so. Then she was glad to fling herself down on the bed again, her back pained her so; and now she could find ease in no one posture for more than a few seconds at a time. It was torture! Just as she believed she had at last found a comfortable position, and was nearly dropping off to sleep,

there came a little gnawing pain that grew and grew in intensity until all chance of sleep fled, and with a weary groan she was obliged to begin tossing and turning anew; and her skin was so hot and dry that she could scarcely bear anything touching it—the bed clothes seemed like sheets of heated lead. Meanwhile every pulse in her frame was beating fast and furious, as though her veins were running with quicksilver.

As the hour came for her to rise, however, a feverish sleep came upon her—not to refresh, but to make her yet more languid and weak. She moaned a faint answer to Mrs. Pincher, when she knocked at the door and told her it was time to get up. But she did not stir—the will, as well as the strength, was waiting.

Master Algernon and Miss Alice waited for their breakfast for some time. But no Miss Carlyle came to make it for them. So they got tired of waiting, and it was agreed that Mrs. Pincher should be waited on by a deputation, consisting of Master Algernon. Accordingly, that amiable child went down to the housekeeper and complained that "that lazy pig, Miss Carlyle, was lying in bed, instead of getting their breakfasts." There-

upon Mrs. Pincher hastened upstairs, and, after knocking at Marian's door twice, without receiving an answer, walked in.

She saw in a moment that the governess was seriously ill, and in the same moment took offence at her impertinence in making herself so troublesome.

"Oh, bother sick people!" said Mrs. P. to herself, as she made her way downstairs to her master, who was taking his breakfast in solitary grandeur, before starting for business.

"Oh, if you please, sir," said Mrs. Pincher, on coming into the presence, "Miss Carlyle's ill."

"Well, I'm sorry for it, but I can't help it, can I Mrs. Pincher?"

"She's too ill to attend to the children, sir."

"Oh, nonsense! she can't be too ill to attend to her duties; I don't pay her to be ill. She must go on."

"She's not up yet, sir."

"Not up! Disgraceful! At this time of day, too! Here am I—a man of my position, out in society last night—here am I, up with the lark, and going off to my labour. Not up! Tell her to get up and see to the

children at once. Tell her I never allow any one in my employment to be ill. By Jove, just let me catch any of my clerks at it—discharged on the spot! Yes, they would, Mrs. Pincher."

"But, sir, I'm afraid, if you please, she's better in bed, for it looks like fever, or something of that sort."

"Fever! Here! In this house! How dare she do it?"

Mrs. Pincher, I suppose, did not see her way to any excuse for Marian's audacity—or did not not try to find one. She only shook her head, as she continued,—

"Better in bed, sir, for the sake of the children. You see they might take it."

At this Mr. Orr did at last get really alarmed.

"Of course, of course! For Heaven's sake, don't let Algernon go near her. Forbid her to leave her room. Don't let her stir out of bed. And, stop! Tell her she must send for a doctor—tell her I insist on her sending for a doctor!"

Mrs. Pincher went back again to Marian's room, and gave her Mr. Orr's message. Poor Marian was too weak and overcome to answer or dispute—she merely bowed her

head, and turning round on her pillow, prayed for the relief of tears, or the relief of death.

When Mrs. Pincher reached her own room again, she rang the bell, summoned one of the canary-coloured to her, and bade him go seek a doctor. As it was intended that his fee should be deducted from Marian's salary when it fell due, Mrs. Pincher told the man to go to a physician close by, and fetch him. Had the fee been chargeable to the housekeeping expenses, a neighbouring chemist would have done admirably well.

In about half an hour's time the physician arrived. Dr. Arthur was a very clever man, but wanted much of the humanity and tenderness which are so necessary in a doctor. He went up to Marian's room, looked at her, felt her pulse, examined her face and neck closely, shook his head, and said nothing until he had left the room.

When he had retired with Mrs. Pincher, and was taking his two guineas, he at last opened his mouth.

"Virulent smallpox!" was all he said. But it was quite enough. Mrs. Pincher gave a shriek and a jump, and hardly giving him time to get down stairs, hustled him out

of the house, slammed the door, and rushed away to her master, who had delayed his departure until he could hear what the doctor said.

"Lord, sir, if it isn't violent smallpox!" said Mrs. Pincher, out of breath with hurry and alarm.

What Mr. Orr said—how he raved and how he swore at Marian for bringing smallpox into the house, and what threats he uttered, I dare not attempt to describe.

CHAPTER IX.

LA GRANDE DAME SANS MERCI.

OFF clattered Mr. Orr's groom on one of the carriage horses to the nearest telegraph office; and away flashed the mysterious spark on its errand, telling the story of Marian's illness to the clerk in the little office belonging to the station down among the hop plantations in Kent. He was not the man to delay a message of Mr. Orr's one moment; and so he dispatched a porter with a letter post haste to the country residence of that great man, situated in its prim *parvenu* park.

When Mrs. Orr received the message, you may imagine her anger and consternation. What was to be done? She must leave Miss Orr where she was—it would never do to risk the infection for her—she might lose all her good looks! In the meantime she, Mrs. Orr, must be off to town without delay.

She must be driven to the station at once, to see when the next train would leave for London.

On reaching the station she learnt that Mr. Orr had sent another telegraphic message —this time to the station-master—ordering a special train for his wife. It was a rather expensive luxury; but Mr. Orr was so utterly helpless in his management of domestic matters without his wife's aid, that it was worth his while to secure her early presence at any cost.

So off steamed Mrs. Orr to London, wondering all the way what she should do with the children. Luckily, she remembered that Mr. Orr's sister, Mrs. Bullyan, had invited them down to stay with her in Hertfordshire. She would pack them off at once, with strict directions to them not to mention the cause of their exile. She might have sent them down into Kent, but she would not for a second endanger dear Honoria. She infinitely preferred the risk of letting the two children go among Mrs. Bullyan's seven little ones.

By the time she had matured this amiable and sisterly plan she found her engine slackening speed to run into the London

Bridge Station, where the yellow chariot was in waiting to convey her to Grosvenor Place.

In and out, among cabs and omnibuses, flashed the yellow chariot, as if panels were imperishable and wheels never got locked. The two bays seldom stepped out to greater purpose, and the coachman was never nearer committing homicide at every crossing.

People to whom that yellow chariot was a familiar object, stared at it—shook their heads—and hurried away to look at the paper, and see what had happened to the Stocks to send old Orr home at such a pace.

Utterances that were not exactly blessings —not loud, but deep—followed the rapid wheels of the family equipage—the utterances of enraged cabmen, defeated 'bus drivers, and scores of pedestrians who had been compelled to fly with their lives in their hands.

Meanwhile, unconscious of and unheeding the astonishment and indignation her progress was exciting, Mrs. Orr sped westward on her errand. Her errand of what? Of mercy? We shall see presently.

She rolled up to the door of the house in Grosvenor Place, where pale footmen waited

to admit her, and trembling housemaids, gathered in Mrs. Pincher's room, were in a high state of expectation as to her probable course. Only Mrs. Pincher maintained her presence of mind. She had had the disease as a girl, and had no fear.

But the rest of the household were thrown into a pitiable state of alarm and consternation. The big footmen turned as white as hair-powder when they learnt the awful news that the smallpox was in the house. "It all came," they said, with an air of great wisdom, "along of 'aving guvnusses and sich about the place!"

As for the female servants, they were in a state of downright revolt, and refused to attend on Miss Carlyle or go anywhere near her room. "Adieu," they thought, and with considerable reason, "to the delicate attentions of the butcher and the baker." Farewell to the hope of inspiring a warmer flame than martial ardour in the breasts of those gallant fellows, who—I suppose on account of their devotion to our female domestics—are called the Household Troops.

But Pincher was quite equal to the occasion. She plied the whip of her scorn to the footmen until they felt as they might

have done had the coachman, in a moment of inadvertence, complied with the public demand of "Whip behind," and laid his lash about their calves. As for the maid-servants, Pincher, as a woman, was able to make them as miserable as possible by giving savage digs at their tender points, and trampling on their most sensitive feelings.

All the servants, for once in their lives, hailed the advent of Mrs. Orr with joy. They did not know what she could or would do, but they seemed to welcome her arrival as that of a sure preserver.

Of course the first thing Mrs. Orr did, on reaching home, was to have an interview with her husband in his sanctum. In that sacred retreat she found him guarding against any danger of infection by smoking a very choice cigar from a box which stood him in about a shilling apiece wholesale, and which he therefore reserved for his own special smoking, giving away to his friends a very superior British article at forty shillings the box. People said, "What bad cigars Orr smoked;" but he did not care. He was inwardly conscious of rectitude and economy.

"The owdacious minx!" were Mrs. Orr's

first words, as soon as the greeting between herself and her husband was over. It did not take long. She simply offered him a portion of her cheek about the circumference of half-a-crown, where there was no rouge or pearl powder to disturb, in the immediate neighbourhood of what I suppose I must call her left curl—for it certainly was hers, though it had been part of the stock-in-trade of her hairdresser about three weeks before.

"The owdacious minx! This all comes of letting her go to see her friends. I thought at the time I was too indulgent. She didn't ought to have any, and I'll never take another that has. Drat her impudence!"

Mr. Orr explained that Mrs. Pincher had since learned that Miss Carlyle attributed her catching the disease to her having picked up a sick child in the park, and carrying it to the hospital for charity.

"Charity, indeed! I'll charity her. What business has she with charity, I should like to know—ain't we employing her out of charity? Why hadn't she thought about 'be just before you're generous,'—what right had she to go and be charitable, and bring home the smallpox to her employer's chil-

dren? You haven't let 'em go near her, I hope. How are they?"

Mr. Orr had forbidden their seeing Miss Carlyle, he said, as soon as he had learnt what was the matter with her. But they had been with her on the Sunday evening after her return.

"How are the darlings? Have you sent for the doctor? He might take precautions, you know, Orr."

Her husband told her he was momentarily expecting the physician's arrival. Algernon had appeared a little dull and heavy in the morning, and his father had instantly called in medical assistance. It may be some relief to the reader, who, I hope, takes a deep interest in that amiable lad, to be told at once that his indisposition merely arose from his having, with his inherited sharp eye for business, attempted to make some hardbake, instead of buying it, and had manufactured a villainous compound eminently calculated to produce indigestion of a violent order.

"I suppose we must pay her her quarter, Orr?"

"Why—you—you don't mean to say you think we can send her off. She's in bed!"

"She must get up, then," said this Christian lady, firmly.

"Thank goodness," said Mr. Orr, "I didn't think it possible, or I should have done it. But where can she go?"

"Out of this house, at any rate. It don't matter a dump to us where she goes then. Ain't there hospitals?"

Mr. Orr said "Yes," with a sigh, for he was compelled to be a "voluntary contributor" to more of those institutions than he liked. Alas, for the cruel duties entailed by wealth and position!

"Now, make haste, and tell me how much we owe her," said the lady.

"Mr. Orr went into a calculation, and found that about fifteen pounds would be due to Miss Carlyle.

"How's that, Orr? Of course you know about money matters better nor I, but I don't make it that!" said Mrs. Orr.

It was two quarters, her husband explained—the girl was entitled to a quarter's notice or a quarter's wages—and then there was the current quarter, unless Mrs. Orr had advanced her anything.

"Advance her anything, indeed! Catch me at it! Not such a fool as that, Orr.

[illegible]

bewilderment, and asked, in a weak voice, "All what?"

"All what, indeed! Why, your going and frequenting with low companions, or taking up with beggar children or what not, and bringing smallpox into the house. All what, indeed! How dare you endanger those blessed children in this way?"

And Mrs. Orr went on in a refined strain of invective for some time, until at last she perceived that she was injuring her own cause—for poor Marian was becoming so prostrated by her violence that she might not be able to move.

So Mrs. Orr wound up her harangue by flinging the eleven pounds five shillings on the bed.

"There, Miss Carlyle, take your money and go! I can't permit you to stop in the house a moment longer."

Poor Marian was aghast at this inhuman order. But Mrs. Orr did not choose to notice her surprise. She rang the bell, and began pacing up and down the room with her handkerchief stuffed to her mouth and nose. No one came. Mrs. Orr rang again furiously; and then, after some delay, Mrs. Pincher made her appearance.

"I couldn't get any of those fools to answer your bell, mum, so I just come myself," said the housekeeper.

"Send for a cab at once, and help Miss Carlyle to pack up and dress," said her mistress.

I am bound in honour to Pincher to admit that even she was a little surprised at such vigorous measures.

"Law, mum, hadn't you better mind? If anything was to happen, inquests would be the result, and might be awkward," she whispered, drawing her mistress on one side.

"I'll risk that! Besides, she hasn't got any friends," was the lady's truly Christian answer, made in the same low tone.

Accordingly, Mrs. Pincher busied herself in pushing Marian's things into her box; which done, she proceeded, with as much gentleness as she was capable of, to dress Marian.

The excitement of her interview with Mrs. Orr, the increasing illness, and the weariness of dressing, were too much for poor Marian. By the time the cab arrived and she was ready, her senses had almost left her, and her brain was wandering.

"Where's she to go, mum?" asked Pincher, coming down to her mistress to announce that the governess was ready to leave.

"Where she likes."

"Law bless you, she can't speak, mum!"

"Send her to the hospital, then."

"Yes, mum. Shall I pay her cab?"

"Cab? No, certainly not! Hasn't she got seven pound ten of mine that she never worked for? She's got money, let her pay."

So Mrs. Pincher contrived, not without difficulty, to get Marian downstairs and into the cab, giving the driver five shillings of the poor girl's money, and telling him to take her to the hospital. It was a nobly humane action, was it not? I doubt not that Mr. and Mrs. Orr felt they had done their duty—nay, more than their duty—for they might simply have pushed her out of doors to fall down and die in the street, they argued; and so they really believed themselves kindly, charitable, and forgiving Christians.

But, unfortunately, this sense of duty done and charity shown was fated to be early disturbed in Mrs. Orr's breast. The

cab, with its half-unconscious freight, could hardly have got out of the next street when Mrs. Orr rang the bell violently. A canary-coloured footman was at once in attendance.

"Run, run! Stop the cab! The ungrateful wretch. Send the police after her!"

The footman went down, looked out of the front door, sauntered to the nearest corner, and then returned to report that the cab was gone beyond pursuit, and there was no policeman in sight.

"The ungrateful wretch! And how stupid of me not to think of it?"

"Of what, my dear?" inquired her husband rather anxiously.

"Why, I never stopped for the doctor's visit out of her wages!"

It is not impossible that some of my readers may put down what I have here written as exaggeration—may be inclined to believe human nature incapable of such cruelty as the Orrs displayed.

But I have set down nothing that is untrue, as they will admit, when I remind them that in the year 1858 or 1859, I forget which—but at all events as near as

that to this present civilised age—a certain Mrs. C—— (so the papers gave her name, enviously robbing her of the fame she so well deserved), an English lady, residing at Boulogne, finding her governess to be dangerously ill, had her dressed and sent off, in a dying state, to her brother, who lived at Lille. The poor girl died on the way, but Mrs. C——, with almost supernatural forethought, had provided for such an accident by attaching to the nearly insensible creature's dress a card, on which was written the address of the brother at Lille.

I don't think, in the face of that veritable history, that my description of what Mrs. Orr was capable of can be a very great exaggeration. To be sure I might have made her think of the direction card, which was an attention of the most delicate nature; but then, you see, Mrs. Orr didn't know where Marian was going! At any rate, as a set-off, you see, Marian went away without paying her doctor's bill, which act of black ingratitude must be some slight excuse for Mrs. Orr if she fails in a few minor details to be quite as humane and thoughtful as the "English lady resident at Boulogne."

Nobody, I suppose, takes any interest in that cab-load of sick governess that goes jolting over the stones—who knows whither? for it is not every cabman who could be safely trusted with a young girl in an unconscious state, and with some disposable luggage.

But I feel sure that every one will be delighted to learn that Marian's imprudence brought no fatal results on the Orr household. Algernon got over his indigestion; and health, and peace, and prosperity still made the great house in Grosvenor Place their head-quarters. What a blessing it must be, my dear Mr. and Mrs. Orr, to have a good conscience and plenty of money!

CHAPTER X.

ALONE IN LONDON.

WITH the morning of the day succeeding that on which Henry Vorian so startled his father with the discovery that he was an honest and honourable gentleman, came a letter from Scrooby, enclosing a cheque to meet his lordship's immediate wants.

It was a curious fact that all the preceding evening, although she could not have expected to hear from Mr. Scrooby so soon, my lady spent much of her time in the library, and contrived somehow to be passing through the hall on some errand or another whenever the postman's knock was audible, and the Lacquoigne letters came tumbling into the letter-box. My lord and she had been invited to Sir Timothy Walsingham's ball that evening, but they did not go. And to the mute surprise of the footman, who was doing duty as porter

in the hall, my lady poked her aristocratic nose into the letter-box, and fished out the letters with her own aristocratic fingers. By the last post the missive, for which apparently she had been on the watch, arrived, for her ladyship gave a sort of satisfied "Ah!" as if her expectations were realised—put it in her pocket, and went upstairs. Yet I fancy the letter was not addressed to her ladyship, but to her ladyship's governess.

This, however, is a digression into which I was unconsciously betrayed by the mention of Scrooby's communication. That communication was eminently satisfactory to my lady. She had now the means of ridding herself of this dangerous and designing young person, who had been laying traps for the heir of the noble house of Lacquoigne.

As for my lord, on receipt of the cheque, he became temporarily joyous, but for other reasons than those which influenced her ladyship. He, like many other poor gentlemen, was really better and happier at the mere sight of money belonging to him, and used to lay it out mentally five or six times over in the fulness of his heart—a medi-

tative extravagance immediately checked by her ladyship, who promptly put him in mind of the numerous quarters in which debts needed to be paid off or reduced, and at the bare mention of which the sum he had been pensively lavishing, dwindled into a drop in the ocean of indebtedness.

This cheque, which Lord Lacquoigne was inwardly appropriating to the purchase of various pleasant but not strictly necessary articles, was, as my lady reminded him, intended to pay off the governess, and enable them to get rid of her with promptitude, as soon as it was cashed, with which intent it was forthwith sent to one of my lord's tradesmen.

"Ah, yes. To be sure, so it is. But confound it, my lady, I could have found plenty to do with it, if that infernal donkey of a boy of ours hadn't run his head against this wall."

"And so could I," said my lady, sweetly; whereupon his lordship felt rebuked.

"You'd better see the girl, my lady, and send her packing. I don't know how to manage these confounded matters."

"Oh, of course I shall discharge my own servants!"

"Ah, yes; I see."

With that his lordship sauntered out of the room, and sat down in the library to read the *Times* comfortably.

"Send Miss Carlyle to me," said my lady to the footman, who had come in to fetch away the silver tea-pot, in order that the children might have their breakfast.

"Yes, m'leddy," said Thomas, and departed on his errand.

In a few minutes there came a faint tap at the door.

"Come in!" said my lady, with a stern cold voice.

Alice entered, looking pale and frightened. Thomas, who was a little curious to know why his noble mistress had sent for the governess, found an excuse for coming into the room again, on the chance of hearing what was said. But Lady Lacquoigne was too much accustomed to maintaining silence before her servants—had too many secrets from her domestics—to be betrayed into any indiscretion. She waited till Thomas, finding his attempt a failure, left the room. But she did not tell Alice to be seated, and so the poor girl had to stand trembling while the deliberate Thomas loitered about, reluctant

to depart, and brimming over with curiosity.

You know the servants' hall — in this house the kitchen—was of course pretty well posted up in what was going on. The last words which had passed between Henry and his father had been overheard, and the reason had been guessed, and there was quite a warm interest felt for once by the servants in the affairs of the family.

At length even Thomas could find no further excuse for loitering about the room, and was compelled to tear himself away.

Then my lady, who had been studiously abstaining from looking at Alice, turned the edge of her aristocratic nose to the poor girl, as the executioner in old times turned the glittering blade of the axe towards the condemned. The hard impenetrable gray eyes gleamed on each side of the cruel promontory, and the thin pale lips were set firmly, just showing the white teeth. It was a face for one of the Fates, if not for the most genteel and high-born of the Furies.

"You are, perhaps, aware, Miss Carlyle, that the Honourable Captain Vorian had an interview with his father yesterday?"

Alice bowed, not daring to raise her eyes

to that stern unrelenting face, and instinctively turning cold as stone.

"I imagined as much!" continued Lady Lacquoigne, "Perhaps you may be aware also of the purpose of that interview?"

Alice, still lacking power of utterance, made a gesture, implying her ignorance.

"I can inform you, then," her ladyship went on, in the same imperturbable voice, "that the Honourable Captain Vorian's father and myself are of opinion that it is time our eldest son, the heir of the peerage, should select a wife from the society in which he moves—from his equals in wealth and position." This last was said with an air of great *hauteur*, as though the Lacquoignes were titled Barings, or Rothschilds with an English peerage. It was said slowly and deliberately, in order that Alice might make no mistake about its meaning, but might appreciate its force thoroughly.

And Alice did feel its meaning—a cold weight oppressed her heart, as though the lid of a marble tomb had been closed down upon it.

"You will understand his lordship's surprise and anger, on learning that a person in his employ has had the audacity to entrap

Captain Vorian into an attachment quite unworthy of his birth—a disgraceful clandestine engagement, which is as dishonourable as it is degrading."

There was no passion, no angry raising of the voice, in the delivery of this bitter speech. Her ladyship weighed out her words, as an apothecary measures out poison, with infinite deliberation and nicety. All the blood in Alice's body seemed to fly to her face and burn there—the torture was so cruel.

"A designing and unscrupulous person, Miss Carlyle, must consent, when detected, to listen to the truth. I consider your conduct base and dishonourable to the highest degree, and rendered, if possible, still more culpable by your assumed air of modesty and respectability. I regret that I should have allowed myself to be deceived by such a commonplace deceit—by such an ordinary trick of women of your description. I received no character with you, and as I took you into my employment without the usual vouchers for your respectability, perhaps I deserve to suffer. But understand, as you came to me without a character, so you leave me. And more! I shall see that you are not permitted to plot against the comfort of

other families—the police will receive instructions to look after you, and I shall even go so much out of my way as to denounce you if ever I learn that you are attempting to insinuate yourself into the employment of respectable families."

The threat about the police was an outburst, cleverly concealed under an appearance of calm, of the malice and anger of a bad woman's mind, enraged at Alice's beauty, which was not lessened as she stood trembling in this haughty lady's presence—now blushing, now paling—with her large blue eyes brimmed with tears. But, absurd and idle as the threat was, it instilled terror into poor Alice's inexperienced mind. The bare idea of being placed under the *surveillance* of the police alarmed her beyond measure, and all the effort she was capable of was barely sufficient to sustain her and keep her from sinking down to earth in her vague horror and sense of utter friendlessness.

Lady Lacquoigne counted out the money due for Alice's salary, and placed it in a little heap on a piece of paper, which she pushed across to Alice as daintily as if she feared infection from the touch of her hand. When

Alice had gathered up the notes and gold, and counted them, my lady resumed her lecture.

"I forbid you, remember, to have any correspondence with my son. If I detect any communications between you, I shall have you punished without any mercy. Our legal adviser will be here this afternoon, and I shall give him the necessary instructions. I consider it my duty as a lady, moving in the sphere in which I am placed, to set a good example, and I feel that I ought not to be deterred by any mistaken pity from punishing such an imposition and deceit as you have practised. It is only on the understanding that you never attempt to see or write to the Honourable Captain Vorian again, that I consent to spare you. You understand?"

Alice, still silent before this torrent of harsh, pitiless denunciation, could only bow her head still lower—sinking almost on her knees in her abasement and misery, and clinging to the table for support.

"You can quit this roof at once — this very instant. And the sooner the better for you, for fear I should repent of my clemency. I am not doing my duty to society.

I ought to expose the practices of a mercenary adventuress, who works her way into noble families with the view of entrapping noblemen's sons into disgraceful connections, from which she hopes to derive position, or perhaps money. You can leave the room!"

Alice turned round, and groped her way to the door. She was so blinded by her tears she could not see—so choked by her sobs she could not speak. Crushed, heart-broken, wild with shame, and grief, and disappointment, she had only one wish now—to fly to her sister, and pour forth all her sorrows to her.

Poor Alice! The petted and spoilt child—the favourite of the household, the indulged girl, the idolised sister—to be treated in this way! It was hard to bear, but luckily Alice's was not a nature to suffer deeply. One who has been caressed and made much of by everybody, loses somewhat in depth of feeling. Without the capacity to love warmly, there seldom exists the compensating power of feeling strongly. It was anger at being thwarted, surprise at being spurned, wounded vanity and self-love, that Alice suffered. I think she hardly thought of Henry and what he had gone through

until long after she had packed up her little box and was preparing to leave. And then his feelings were soon forgotten in the recollection that her dreams of the future—and they were not dreams of love in a cottage —had been rudely dissipated.

A cab was summoned presently, and Alice's baggage was placed on the roof; and then my lady saw her off the premises, watching her from the top of the first flight of stairs, as if she feared she might kidnap Henry, and carry him off in her passage through the hall.

"Where to, Miss?" asked the cabman, as he closed the door.

For a moment Alice was puzzled for an answer to this simple question; but the next instant she remembered Mrs. Bartlett.

"Number one hundred and seventy-five, Pratt Street, Camden Town," she said.

"All right, Miss," said the cabman, clambering to his seat.

Off they rattled and jingled all the weary way to Pratt Street, where the cabman, on reaching the desired number, knocked, and then held the cab door open in readiness.

Alice got out, and reached the steps just as the servant appeared.

"Is Mrs. Bartlett in?" asked Alice.

"Don't know such a person," was the reply, which rather staggered Alice.

"This is one hundred and seventy-five, is it not?"

"Oh, yes, this is a hundred and seventy-five, all right."

"And you're sure Mrs. Bartlett doesn't live here? This *is* Pratt Street, I'm sure."

"I'll go and ask missis," said the servant, prudently shutting the door in Alice's face, for fear she should be tempted to steal the umbrellas in the hall.

In a minute the door reopened, and the servant appeared again, accompanied this time by a stout red-faced woman, who had evidently just come steaming from the washing-tub.

"Mrs. Bartlett had used to live here, mum," said the new comer. "But she have a-gone nearly six months. I took the house arter her."

"You don't know where she has moved?"

"I have a-heard tell as she had a boarding-house in some of them streets near St. James's Square, but I can't mind the name nohow."

Here was a perplexity! What could Alice do with her boxes? She asked the cabman's

advice, telling him that the person with whom she was going to stay had, it appeared, removed without letting her know.

"Well, yer'd better go back where yer come from," he said, gruffly; "London's a big place for to go a-looking for your friends in without any direckshuns."

Alice said she could not go back, and asked him what she should do about her boxes.

"Oh, as for them, you can 'posit them at the cloak room of the railway, nigh handy here."

The suggestion was the best she could get, so Alice drove off to the station, and left her boxes there. I suppose the cabman considered that advice was not to be expected gratis, so stuck on an extra shilling to his fare. At any rate, the sum he demanded was so large that, though she did not dispute it, Alice felt that she must be very sparing in the luxury of cabs in future. Accordingly, she set out to walk to Grosvenor Place, where she intended to ask to see Marian, and get her advice as to what she should do.

It was a longish walk for one who had gone through what she had that morning. It was a disagreeable walk, too; for Alice, as

we know, was pretty, and a girl who is pretty and unprotected cannot walk in London very far without attracting the attention of some of those idle vagabonds, with better clothes than breeding, who make it their business to degrade their own sex and insult the other by their insolent blackguardism. Although I am by no means a vehement admirer of the police, who, I think, are getting too despotic and arbitrary, I could with infinite satisfaction see every constable armed with a horse-whip to chastise these disgraces of hood.

It was long after noon when Alice reached Mrs. Orr's mansion in Grosvenor Place, and knocked timidly at the door. The yellow chariot was in waiting to take Mrs. Orr out for her airing; and a little crowd, consisting of a butcher, three newspaper boys, and a lad from a telegraph office, was collected about the steps to see the she-millionaire enter her carriage.

"Can I see Miss Carlyle, please?" asked Alice, with a tremulous voice, of the footman who opened the door.

"She ain't 'ere. She were sent away two or three days ago with the smallpox," said the canary-coloured flunkey, turning away

immediately, and beginning to close the door.

Alice was horror-struck at the news, and could scarcely find voice enough to ask if the footman could inform her where her sister was gone.

"Oh, to the horsepital, I suppose."

"Which one, do you know?" Alice asked, when Mrs. Orr, descending the stairs, asked, in a loud voice—

"What is it, James? What does she want?"

"Please, m'm, it's a young person a-henquiring after Miss Carlyle, m'm, which she's her sister, she says, m'm——"

"Send her away! Shut the door, James. Why, Lor', we shall have her bringing more smallpox. Tell her to go at once!"

The door was instantly shut in Alice's face, amid the cheers of the assembled crowd, which, with the usual consistency of a mob, took the side of successful tyranny.

It seemed now to Alice as if all the world were against her, and she had not a friend left. She drew down her veil hastily, to conceal the tears she could not repress,

and instinctively hurried away to the Park—to the quiet corner where she and Marian had been accustomed to meet. There she sank down on the bench, and sobbed bitterly without ceasing.

CHAPTER XI.

VARIOLA VICTRIX.

WHEN the cabman who conveyed Marian away from the Orrs' got a little out of the large thoroughfares, and was passing through some of the quiet streets of Pimlico, he turned round, and peered in through the front window at his fare.

Marian was quite insensible now. She was lying back in a corner of the cab in a dead faint. So the cabman pulled up, got down, opened the door, and first spoke to and subsequently shook her. But he could not rouse her from her stupor.

There was no need for him to be afraid to touch her, for his own face was seamed and pitted by the ravages of the dreadful disease. Of course he had stood out to Mrs. Pincher for extra fare on account of the infection, but that was because of the cab, not himself—

though I don't suppose he had any intention of handing over the surplus to the next person who hailed him, as a sort of insurance against the risk.

When he found that she continued insensible, he mounted his box again, and, whipping his horse into a jog-trot, turned off by some back streets, and finally pulled up in a low, dirty lane in Westminster.

In answer to his whistle, an unshaven, dirty, disreputable looking Jew came shambling out of an ill-looking, low-browed house.

"Vell, vat ish it, George?" snuffled the Hebrew.

"Here—lend a 'and, and take this here in," said the cabman, taking Marian's luggage off the roof.

"Shelp me if you ain't a cool 'un," whispered the Israelite, hoarsely, and holding off, "with a fare inshide too."

"Lor bless yer, she's dead drunk. Now, then, look sharp, and take 'em in. I'll be back by-an'-by about 'em!"

After peering into the cab to assure himself of the insensibility of the fare, the Jew dismissed his scruples, and the luggage was removed from the roof, and conveyed into the

house with an alacrity that showed considerable practice. During the operation, the child of Abraham kept a sharp eye up and down the lane, with his head on one side all the time, like an evil magpie, which bird he resembled in every particular save the cleanliness and gloss of his plumage.

This little arrangement completed, the cabman once more mounted his box, and drove off. But he had not gone very far before the door of a favourite public-house of his standing temptingly on the swing invited him to drink to his own success in the late transfer of property. The fact was that he had deposited Marian's boxes with a Jew "fence," from whom, of course, he concealed the real cause of her insensibility, for fear the acute Israelite should make it a reason for beating him down in his bargain.

The temptation of the public-house was too strong for this enterprising spirit, so at the risk of his fare recovering consciousness, and possibly inquiring after her boxes (though that was improbable), as she had been too ill to notice their being put on the roof), he got down and entered the bar, to have a drink in honour of the occasion.

It so happened, however, that our com-

mercial cabman had not long entered the bar when policeman A 299 came down the street. That intelligent officer was flushed with recent triumphs. He had chased a small boy who had been playing chuck-halfpenny, and had kicked him in the back pleasantly. He had pushed an Irishwoman into the gutter, and upset the oranges she was trying to sell. He had made two gentlemen connected with the Press (for which, like all crass despotisms, he entertained a rooted aversion) move on, on the supposition that, in comparing notes in their reports they constituted a betting nuisance. In consequence, A 299 was radiant.

As he passed the door of the "Dog and Dolphin," there came to him a pleasant odour of stale beer and yesterday's tobacco, and he remembered that of late he had not been propitiated with quarterns while on night duty outside that establishment. He registered a vow to be revenged, and looked about him for a means of injuring the custom of the house. He spied the cab, and, peering into the vehicle, perceived its occupant. Marian was just recovering herself a little, and was moaning weakly. The intelligent A 299, seeing a respectable young woman

evidently in great pain, at once set her down as being intoxicated, but, failing to detect any of the familiar smell of spirits about her, was obliged to think of something else.

Putting his head in at the bar-door, he fixed the cabman with his glittering eye, and said, with a voice of authority, "'Ere, cabby, wot 'a you got in your wehicle 'ere? Come on, and no nonsense, or I'll lock yer up!"

The cabman obeyed this summons with cringing alacrity, and was as terrified as a bad conscience should be. He was much relieved, however, by the landlord, who, knowing A 299 pretty well, gave cabby a wink, and indicated by a rapid telegraphy that the constabular ferocity would be soluble in spirits.

"Wot a' yer got 'ere, eh?" said A 299 sternly.

"Well, ye see, sir, it's a poor crittur as I'm a-takin' to the workus for charity, along o' bein' struck wi' small pox, and which it was on that account for to keep off affeck-shun, bein' a family man, as I step in 'ere for to 'ave a little sperrit for to guard again it; and as you have been a-puttin' yer 'ead inside the cab, you might be took, an' if you'll allow me I'd be obliged if you'd let me hoffer

ye a drop for to keep it off, as it is very rapid in takin' to one."

"Well, under them surkumstances," said A 299, wetting his lips involuntarily, "I'll jest take 'arf a drop as a matter of dooty, having to mix with the public, and might carry it with me if I didn't. An' after that I'll get up alongside and go with ye to the workus."

Accordingly cabby and constable took a glass together, and presently drove off to the workhouse. It was, perhaps, not the cabman's intention to take Marian to the workhouse; but having committed himself to that statement, he was obliged to stick to it when the policeman, with an eye to making himself important and conspicuous for zeal, volunteered to accompany him

It was well for Marian that A 299 did volunteer, for even he had some difficulty in persuading the workhouse authorities to admit her. With extraordinary sagacity, he pointed out that while they were disputing about her parish, she was dying at the gates, and that her death would be rather awkward for them if he happened to be called on to give evidence before the coroner.

Grumbling considerably, and protesting

against her impertinence in venturing to die anywhere but in her own parish, the tender guardians of the poor, appointed by law and the parish, at last consented to take Marian in under protest. They even, under compulsion of A 299, who inwardly intended to levy a per-centage thereon, paid the cabman his fare, so that, altogether, he had done rather a brisk morning's work without any risk or inconvenience to himself, for, of course, even supposing the next person who got into his cab was laid up with smallpox, it could not possibly be brought home to him. We must, however, now let this interesting individual, and that active and intelligent officer, A 299, disappear into space—probably amid the sincere regrets, and much against the wishes, of my readers, who, I hope, take an interest in these two precious characters. Just at this juncture, unfortunately, others claim our attention.

Here, then, is poor Marian, lying on the coarse pallet of the Union! She is smitten with that most awful of all the scourges inflicted upon human nature by an inscrutable Providence—she is suffering from virulent small-pox, a disease which requires the most careful treatment, the most tender nursing,

the most excellent medicine, the most nourishing diet, and the most complete silence. She will be attended by a medical man, underpaid for the amount of work he is expected to do, perhaps overpaid for the amount of knowledge and ability he brings to it. She will be taken charge of by pauper nurses, who never had sufficient energy to take care of themselves, or they would not be here, and who lack the nurse's best qualities—patience, intelligence, and experience. She will be physicked with inferior drugs, even supposing first of all that the right ones are prescribed, and when prescribed made up. She will be fed on coarse gruel, or even supposing she have special diet ordered, it will consist (if it be not intercepted by the way) of beef-tea of about the strength obtained by dipping a pound of meat in a bucket of cold water, and of wine which is simply a decoction of dirt, dye, and unwholesome spirit. She will pass through the fiery ordeal amid the clamour of discontented paupers, the bustle and disturbance of incompetent attendants, in a ward more like a prison than a sick chamber, and with a bed and bedding fitter for a hardy soldier compelled to shift as he can on campaign than for an invalid

under treatment for a dangerous and painful disorder.

It was almost a mercy when delirium supervened. In that she lost consciousness of the insatiable thirst which parched her day and night, of the restlessness that made sleep a stranger to her eyelids, of the strange unaccountable anxiety which turned thought into torture, of the feverish nervousness which aggravated the slightest noise into unbearable clamour, and caused her to shrink even at a word.

In alternate fits of prostration and wild raving she passed from the earlier stages of the disease to the later. Her sufferings at Mrs. Orr's hands, the exposure and neglect she experienced on her way to the workhouse, and the insufficient treatment she met with there, all tended together to intensify the pain and increase the violence of the disease. The doctor gave her over; the nurses began to wish her gone; the patients in the ward abused her and complained querulously of her tenacity of life. But youth and a fine constitution were ranged on her side, and by-and-by the disease took its departure, but left her utterly prostrate. She lay on the narrow strand between life and death, conscious now

—seeing the cold wave creeping up to her, but utterly incapable of any effort to escape from its fatal embrace.

By degrees—by very slow, almost imperceptible degrees, however,—she at last began to get hold of life again; began to take a pitying interest in herself, and to wonder what had happened to her, and where she was.

By-and-by she had gained strength enough to speak and make inquiries. Then she was told what had been the matter with her; and so, after a time, she began to recall the past bit by bit, to build up her bygone life as we patch up a dream from its disjointed recollections. At last she remembered all, and then making inquiries found that she had been brought to the workhouse door, a beggar, without a penny or a rag in the world. She could not understand it.

There came a day when she was well enough to speak to her doctor, and ask what had happened to her; what was the disease she had suffered from. And when he told her small-pox, there came a terrible doubt and anxiety over her, but she was too true a woman to let him perceive it. But presently, when he was gone, she called one of the pauper nurses to her, and asked her to bring

her a looking-glass. She would not ask her if she was disfigured; she preferred to trust her own eyes.

The old hag laughed at the request. What did paupers want with looking-glasses? She did not think there was such a thing in the place. Another nurse, younger and therefore better able to sympathise with Marian, promised to try to get her one, looking at the poor girl sadly, and shaking her head as she hurried away.

Before long she returned with a fragment of mirror—a little relic of vanity—still clung to even in this debasement and Slough of Despond by some poor creature that had once had a face—perhaps only too pretty!

With a trembling hand Marian clutched the bit of glass. The nurse with instinctive delicacy turned away and busied herself with another patient.

And then Marian looked and saw the wreck of her former self. Her head had been shaved in her delirium, and the hair had hardly begun to grow again in short downy curls. Her complexion was white, dull, and leprous—there was no transparency in the skin, no delicate bloom on the cheek—and here and there a disfiguring pit marked

it deeply. Her eyes had lost their lustre—her lips were pale and parched, and her cheeks were hollow and thin!

Would any one recognise her in this living corpse? she wondered to herself. And then came the bitterest agony of all: Would *he* know her again? Or supposing he did discern in these marred features the ghost of the woman he had been about to marry, could he continue to care for her?

I believe if Death, with all his most racking tortures, had snatched Marian away—had torn from her her young life with all its strong roots clinging to existence, at the time when the disease first seized her, she would not have suffered one tithe of what she felt now, as she lay slowly recovering, with the awful knowledge of the change that had been wrought in her. If she had died, she must have consented to part from him in the certainty of a happier meeting and a renewal of love hereafter. He would have visited her grave, and have discerned through the turf, not the face of a corpse, but the features of her he had loved, and his tears falling there would have reached, warm, to her cold heart. But now she was living and dead. She was another woman, she felt;

and if he ceased to love her so changed, it was rather a proof of his constancy to that other self of hers that he had first loved. "Who knows," she thought, "but that if I had died he might have forgotten—but then I should not have known it, sleeping quietly. But now to live and see him changed is very death in life—to love him and know he cannot love me—to be near him, and nothing to him—oh, it is bitterer than death!"

CHAPTER XII.

MISS DELAMERE'S EMPORIUM.

THE gathering shades of evening at last reminded Alice that she had no home for the night. She rose from the bench on which she had been seated, and wandered away without any definite purpose, but feeling that at all events she must leave the Park.

Chance conducted her steps towards Pimlico, and she walked far in that uninteresting suburb, with its miles of streets, all bearing the same stolid stucco faces, only differing very slightly from each other in small details. There are few things so depressing as a modern suburb. It presents a weary sameness—an unending repetition of pretentious shams: porticos with plaster peeling off ere they be a year old; windows that pretend to be plate-glass, but whose large panes bulge and buckle, and reflect distortedly; wide

doorways opening on narrow halls; lofty rooms with ceilings that crack as soon as the upper rooms receive their furniture; imitation marble mantelpieces over chimneys that always smoke; and doors, grained to represent maple, that warp and crack, and let in draughts innumerable.

In this unhomelike neighbourhood poor Alice wandered in search of a home. She looked wistfully at many a house where a card anounced "Lodgings to let." But she could find no encouragement in the mere blank look of these places. She could not guess from the look of them what kind of people they were who lived there.

At last she found one house where the ticket was placed in a window full of flowers. "Here," she thought to herself, "is some one who loves flowers. I will try here."

She knocked at the door—a modest, faint tap. Immediately a heavy step shuffled along the passage, and a stout old lady opened the door.

"You let lodgings, I believe?" said Alice.

"Oh, we don't want any of your sort here, young woman," was the only answer she got as the door was slammed in her face.

She was utterly aghast, and could not conceive why she was treated so harshly. But it was getting so late now that she could not stay to choose, so she made up her mind with a great effort to knock at the next house where she saw a bill up. She did so, but with the same result as before. After all, it was lucky for her that she went to lodgings which refused to take her in. She might have had a far worse fortune.

At length she was so wearied out and broken-spirited that she was fit to sit down in the street and cry her heart out. Just now, too, she began to feel faint and hungry.

She made her way to a baker's shop close by, and asked for a meat-pie. The girl in the shop, seeing how ill she looked, brought her a glass of water, and paid such kind attention to her, that poor Alice's heart grew too full, and she burst into an agony of tears. The girl tried to comfort her; and her sympathy seemed so precious to our poor Alice that, before many minutes were over, she had told her all her story, and they were sitting side by side as if they had been friends for years.

"Law there," said the girl, who was as ungrammatical as she was good, "them

people a-course didn't take you in without any luggage, and you a young woman by yourself; more especial in this here neighbourhood. But look here; mother's a washerwoman, and she have a room to let, and you're welcome to it till you can look about you a bit."

Alice was very grateful, and accepted the offer eagerly. She wished her new-found friend to tell her where her mother lived.

"Oh, I'll speak to Mrs. Bocking; she'll let you sit in the parlour along with her for an hour or so, when we shall 'ave to shut up shop, and we can go 'ome together; and you can fetch your boxes to-morrow."

In about an hour's time Alice and her new friend left the baker's shop, and walked to the latter's home, which was in a small lane near one of the great squares. The house where Mary Smart's mother lived was very humble and poorly furnished; but it was clean, and poor weary Alice was only too happy to fling herself on her hard bed, and seek refuge from her cares in sleep.

Mrs. Smart was a laundress, who washed for several families in the square, and who eked out her earnings by letting one of her rooms to servants out of place or respectable

needlewomen. She was honest, hard-working, and kindly-dispositioned, but a very dragon when put out. She was a little doubtful of her daughter's prudence in bringing Alice home.

"There! I only hope she won't turn out a good-for-nothing baggage, Mary; which so she might, and no great wonder, for respectable people isn't picked up permiskus in the streets along of coming in for a meat-pie and a glass o' water. Though such I hope it won't be, for she's pleasing to speak to and tidy in her 'abits, as far as I can see."

The next day Alice went over and fetched her boxes, and arranged to take Mrs. Smart's lodgings until she could "turn herself round," as Mrs. Smart described it. That operation seems easy enough at first sight, but is in reality a very difficult and disheartening task.

"What are you a-going to do then, my dear?" said Mary Smart.

"I don't know a bit in the world!"

"You're afraid of going out a-governessing again!"

"Oh, yes! Her ladyship is such a stern, unforgiving woman, she would hunt me down wherever I was. I declare I'm afraid to go

out for fear some policeman should be after me."

"Lor, you hadn't need be frightened of them there. Why they ain't above taking something to shut their eyes—not they! But if you don't like governessing, there's 'eaps of other things. Can you sew nice?"

"Yes, pretty neatly."

"There! I wish I could—but, bless ye, mother never could make nothing of me with my needle; and that's how it is I've been forced to go to baking and that. She could 'a got me a deal of sewing along of washing for Mr. Corker, the shirt-maker."

"Do you think she could get me anything of the sort to do?"

"I dare say as she could, my dear; I'll arsk her. Here, mother, just come here a minute, will yer?"

Mrs. Smart, who was up to her elbows in soapsuds, dried her hands, scraped the lather from her arms, and came, with a mild cloud of steam hanging about her.

"Well, what do you want now, Mary?"

"Look here, mother, the young lady 'ud be glad of some needlework to do. Don't you think as you might get her some from old Corker?"

"Law bless ye, my dear!" said Mrs. Smart, turning to Alice, "'twouldn't never pay you. The price as they give is sheer starvation. But I'll tell you what I might manage for you—get Miss Delamere, as keeps the bonnet-shop, which I washes for her, for to give you a trial. I know as one of her showwomen was married recent; and I don't think as she's suited herself yet, for I see a card in the window yesterday as I went by with Mrs. Barker's linen, as lives in Aireybeller Row."

"Would you kindly give me a note to her, Mrs. Smart?"

"Law, Miss, I can't write no more than figures and such simple things as is requisite for to put down washin' in; which, with the cepshun of sinding of my name, I can't write at all. But I'll just step round with you if you like, in about ten minutes, when I've a-wrung out the things as I have in the tub."

Miss Delamere's shop was a very gorgeous affair, with two large plate-glass windows in which was arranged a forest of the most showy bonnets, mounted on tall stands, like the heads of traitors on Temple Bar. Beyond these you saw a most charming apartment, fitted up with mirrors and gold-and-white

chairs and muslin curtains, like an elegant boudoir. Into this pleasant retreat Alice and Mrs. Smart presently forced their way through a crowd of women, of all ages and ranks, engaged in staring in at the two windows of bonnets with, generally, speechless admiration.

Miss Delamere was a fine, tall woman, with a commanding air and a very rustling black silk dress. She was a regular Tartar in her shop, and all her women trembled before her. She was a dragon of propriety—so particular that you could not possibly believe a rumour (no doubt set afoot by Mrs. Jones, who had the rival bonnet-shop ten doors off) to the effect that Miss D. had been set up in business by a friend in the City; and that she had been seen at whitebait parties at Greenwich with very stylishly dressed ladies and gentlemen; and—and any other scandal you like which is at all calculated to injure her reputation. At any rate, she was regular and punctual at business, and had never been know to absent herself from the shop but once, when she went—it happened to be one Derby-day—to see her mother in the country, and missed the train; and so was away for nearly two days.

The most fashionable ladies came to Miss Delamere for their bonnets. Some of the prettiest bonnets that appeared in the Park of an afternoon were purchased at Miss Delamere's. She certainly had exquisite taste, and was not unreasonable—for a fashionable bonnet-maker.

Mrs. Smart introduced Alice to Miss Delamere, and told that lady of Alice's wish to enter her service as shopwoman. Miss Delamere eyed the poor girl from head to foot through her gold eye-glass. After some preliminary conversation, Miss Delamere said—

"You have a silk dress, I suppose."

Alice answered yes; she had two or three.

"We like our young people to dress in silk—all one colour, with as little pattern as possible."

Alice said she had a brown, which would be just what Miss Delamere wished.

"You know nothing of the business?"—Alice shook her head—"Then of course you are aware you must give six months of your time to learn it?"

Alice wondered if the little sum of money she had would last her as long—but she could not demur.

"You can come here to-morrow, then, if

you like. And, by-the-bye, if you have a watch and chain—or a chain only—you may as well put it on."

Alice promised to do so; and was about to go, when Miss Delamere recalled her.

"I forgot to tell you, Miss Carlyle, that I can allow no levity of conduct. I cannot permit anything of the sort. I have had to discharge several of my shop-girls for giggling at young men as they go by when they are dressing the windows of a-morning. I can have no young men dangling about outside the shop, staring. You perfectly understand that? The first time I notice anything of the sort, you go. Remember that!"

Alice saw no particular hardship in that; so the bargain was struck, and the next morning found Alice at the shop in her plain brown silk dress, and with her gold chain on. Miss Delamere expressed herself satisfied with her appearance.

"And now, Miss Carlyle, you may try your hand at dressing the window."

Alice set about her task at once, but found it far more trying than she had expected. As she stood in the window arranging the bonnets, every one who passed by stared

hard at her; and some of the rude young clerks, on their way to their offices, winked or smiled at her impudently. Miss Delamere stood by, directing and advising; but she kept carefully out of sight, so poor Alice had to run the gauntlet of all the rude looks and leers, alone.

When she had finished the window, she was pleased to hear Miss Delamere express herself satisfied.

"Very good—very good indeed for a beginner. Done with great taste; but quite capable of improvement, Miss Carlyle, as I'll show you;" and then Miss Delamere pointed out some minor matters which needed alteration.

Then Alice was instructed in the mystery of the price-tickets, which, it appeared, were capable of several interpretations, according to the kind of purchaser. Each article was, in fact, fixed at a price with a certain margin, either for reduction or addition, as the buyer appeared able to pay or not. Miss Delamere explained to Alice that this system was not adopted with a view to making a gain, but simply because some ladies would not take a bonnet unless its cost was considerable; they would not believe the article

was good — at all events, that it was not likely to become common,—unless they paid dearly for it. And I dare say there was a good deal of truth in this theory of Miss Delamere's, though I'm inclined to think she had other motives.

A weary, troublesome day was Alice's first day at the bonnet shop. It was just at the beginning of the season, and ladies were getting their new bonnets, so there was a rapid succession of customers. But, oh, what difficult people to manage those customers were! Women, in spite of their naturally tender dispositions, are cruelly and heartlessly pitiless to one another. Poor Alice ransacked the shop through and through again, while her customers sat blandly smiling, and perhaps after all selected the first article she had brought them.

About midday she and the other young ladies in the shop were summoned to dinner, which consisted of flabby beef and suet dumplings. Nothing but downright hunger would have induced Alice to eat such greasy and uninviting viands. She found her companions were in the habit of clubbing their halfpence to buy beer, and she joined them,

for she really required some refreshing stimulant.

Her companions soon got into conversation with her, and it was very clear that they did not love Miss Delamere, or believe in the rigorous propriety which she professed. As for levity!—I grieve to say these young ladies had nicknames for all the regular passers-by—all the young clerks who daily went to their business. They had even made a sort of partition of them, and had allotted themselves so many apiece, as sweethearts, and spoke of them in endearing terms that would have startled Miss Delamere into hysterics.

A great deal of fun was made about Alice, and the mode in which she was to be supplied with a few sweethearts to begin with. Each of her friends offered to present her with one of hers; but as they would not part with any but the least prepossessing, it was self-evident that this arrangement was not a fair one. So it was agreed that they should let Alice draw one from each; and they had just written the nicknames on bits of paper, and Alice, who felt it would be best to keep on good terms with her shopmates, and therefore fell in at once with the

proposition, was just about to begin drawing, when Miss Delamere's voice was heard at the top of the stairs.

"Young ladies, young ladies! A great deal too much noise. And, pray, how much longer are you going to be over your dinners?"

There was a general scurry and hustling away of lottery tickets, and the young ladies hastened upstairs, where Miss Delamere lectured them soundly one by one, telling each separately that she was the worst of the lot, and spoiling all the others, and that she (Miss Delamere) was determined not to keep her any longer.

As for Alice, Miss Delamere informed her privately that of course she did not include her in the condemnation, but she hoped "it would not occur again," and wished Miss Carlyle would try and influence the girls for their good. She (Miss Delamere) felt towards them all like a mother, and they pained and grieved her terribly at times.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOUND—AND LOST.

POOR James Trefusis might well hate the sight of a postman. He had ceased to regard that functionary in the light of a benefactor long ago, when he brought home at tedious intervals those rambling evasive missives from the Ordnance Office. Was not the Post Office, after all, only a Government office, and what had Government offices ever done for him that he should be grateful? No! they were all in league to harass and plague him, as a revenge for his venturing to disturb the blessed indolence of the Ordnance Office. He was to be pursued and hunted down, he persuaded himself, and he looked upon the postman as a persecutor.

And now he really had some reason to complain. He had just received a large official envelope, with that everlasting inscription, "On Her Majesty's Service;" but in

addition to that too familiar sentence, there were other notifications on this cover. It was marked, "Returned Letter Branch, General Post Office," and furthermore stated to contain a "Returned *Paid* Letter."

In that cover was his last letter to Marian, addressed to her at Mr. Orr's.

James had been for some time at a loss to account for Marian's silence. Sunday after Sunday, he had gone to the old rendezvous in the Park, but neither Marian nor Alice had appeared there. He could not understand it. At last he determined to write to Marian and ask her what had happened. Time went on and no answer came, and he was just thinking he would write again, and trying to persuade himself that he must have forgotten to post his epistle, or it must have been mislaid, when the returned letter reached him.

"What can be the meaning of this?" he asked himself, as he opened the official envelope and found his own missive scrawled over in various illegible hands, with all sorts of remarks, the spirit of which was, in brief, "Not known. Gone away, and left no address."

"What on earth is the meaning of this?

They must surely know at the Orr's where she is, even if she has left them. It must be some of the usual official stupidity on the part of the Post Office. I'm going into the City, and I'll call in at old Orr's office and inquire."

Accordingly, in the afternoon Mr. Trefusis's card was taken into Mr. Orr's gloomy sanctum in the City. Mr. Orr never refused to see callers who were not known to him, for fear, perhaps, of refusing to entertain angels—and by angels I mean gold coins, value about ten shillings sterling. Mr. Orr was always ready to turn a penny out of anyone or anything, and he therefore never refused to see those who called upon him, unless he knew them, and was pretty well sure there was nothing more to be got by cultivating their acquaintance. When you have squeezed an orange dry, what, I should like to know, is the use of clinging to the husk? "Fling it away by all means," would be Mr. Orr's advice; "but don't throw it on the pavement!"—not because some foot passenger may be thrown down and break his leg, but because, being so thrown down and breaking his leg, he may come on you for damages if he can trace his calamity to you.

Mr. Orr, then, received James Trefusis courteously.

"Pray take a seat, sir. Of what service can I be to you, sir? In any way related to Sir Colman Trefusis, of Polmagenic?"

James remained standing, politely disavowed a relationship with Sir Colman, and briefly told Mr. Orr that the service he could do him consisted in his telling him what had become of his late governess, Miss Carlyle.

At this, Mr. Orr began to turn red, and swell and wag his head like an irritated turkey-cock.

"The young woman had been seized with smallpox, and had been sent to the hospital."

"Could Mr. Orr tell him which hospital?" James inquired.

Mr. Orr couldn't. He had left the affair in the hands of Mrs. Orr, who had placed it in the hands of the housekeeper.

"Had Mr. Orr any objection to allowing him to ask the housekeeper?" James persisted.

Mr. Orr had every objection. He did not choose to have his household worried and badgered about a person they didn't know or care anything about. Miss What's-her-

name had been mixing in low society, and caught a complaint prevalent among common people, and brought it into his house—into Mr. Orr's house! He didn't know, or wish to know anything about it. He didn't think she was better than she should be.

At that, James brought his fist down on the table within an inch of Mr. Orr's nose with a bang that made the magnate nearly jump out of his chair.

"Retract that this moment, sir! If you dare to breathe one word against that lady, I'll break every bone in your body. Beg pardon, sir, this moment!"

Mr. Orr looked towards the bell, but it was too far off, so he gobbled out a few words of apology.

"Now, sir, before you rise, will you tell me all you know about Miss Carlyle?"

"'Pon my soul I don't know any more. She was taken ill, and the housekeeper sent her away in a cab. That's all I know. It is, upon my soul!"

"More shame for you, you hoary old villain—you respectable scoundrel! You, a man of your age, and a father, sent that poor orphan girl in such a state, alone—to her death! I've a great mind to knock

your miserable old head against that iron safe there, which you make your God. For shame, you degraded old man! You cowardly murderer!"

With these words James was striding out of the room, when Mr. Orr jumped up and ran to the bell.

"Now, by Gad, sir," said the old coward, recovering courage with safety, "I've got you! What's to prevent my ringing the bell, and giving you in charge for assault, intimidation, attempted robbery?" and he foamed and spluttered in his excessive rage.

"What prevents you? Your own cowardice, sir! Dare to do so, and I'll expose your conduct. I'll proclaim it in open court, and every newspaper in the land shall echo your shame—every place shall ring with your brutality."

The shot was a random one, but it told. "Those blackguard papers would rejoice," thought Mr. Orr, "in an opportunity of showing me up. It might be awkward." So he did not ring the bell, and allowed James to depart unmolested.

When he left Orr's, James started forth at once on a pilgrimage to the various hospitals in London. As my readers can understand

he failed in finding any trace of Marian, although at one he learnt that a young girl, nearly answering to the description he gave, had been brought in dying of scarlet fever—not smallpox—that she had died, and was buried, and that her name had not been discovered.

With what doubt and grief this filled the poor fellow's heart, I need not attempt to tell you. Was this, then, the end of his dream? Of what worth would all the most brilliant success be to him now? He had nothing left to live for, if in that nameless grave in unconsecrated soil lay all that remained of the woman he had so deeply and devotedly loved.

Fortunately, by some merciful provision, the human heart is slow indeed to give up hope, and James still clung to the belief that it could not be Marian who had died thus. He recalled and magnified all the little discrepancies in the story, until he half persuaded himself that it could not be she.

And so the time wore on wearily for James Trefusis, and he began to long for the evening when there should come a folding of hands and unbroken sleep.

Now that James had lost heart for the

struggle, his brother-inventor, the old captain of artillery, began—half in hopes of rousing his companion, half because he could not bear to see it lying inactive—to stir about the gun.

It was clearly no use to go on trying to drive justice or common sense into the heads of the Ordnance Office authorities. The old soldier, not without a struggle between his ambition and his patriotism, determined to submit the invention to some of the foreign Governments. With this view he called in Charlie Crawhall's aid; and the hare-brained artist, so utterly impracticable on his own behalf, was wise, and prudent, and judicious in advising for another's benefit.

"Take it to the Emperor of the French, captain. He's the chap to appreciate a thing of this sort at a glance."

"How is it to be done?"

"Why Jim must go over to Paris, with an introduction to some of the swells there—he can easily get it from some of his swell directors—and he won't have much difficulty in getting an audience."

Thereupon the old captain explained to Charlie that James had of late fallen into a melancholy from which nothing could rouse

him. Charlie was puzzled at this, but did not doubt but that he could discover the cause of this change. He took James on one side presently, and proposed a stroll in Greenwich Park. James did not care to go, but was at last prevailed upon. The old captain wanted a walk, too; so off they went in a body.

Now Charlie had proposed the stroll with a view to getting away from the old man—so all he could do was to give him a hint to wander away, and leave him and James together awhile.

Lying on the grass, pipe in mouth, Charlie cautiously tried to get at the cause of James's sorrow. Never was there such a picture of sorrow as the poor fellow looked now, sitting on the sloping bank, with his elbows on his knees, and his hands and head drooping listlessly.

It needed little on Charlie's part to persuade James to tell him his grief. The unhappy wretch was only too glad to pour out his troubles to some sympathising friend.

Charlie looked very grave throughout the recital, and did not seem to see any hope. All at once he sprang up, and seized James by the shoulder.

"Jim, Jim, old boy! Are you strong enough to bear good news—at least a hope —a chance?"

"Yes. What is it?" was the eager answer.

"You know Jack Bathurst, Jim—used to write for the *Weekly Storehouse*, and edited the *Friend of the Household* for Brownsmith? Well! he's doing a work on pauperism for Jones, and the other day he was to do a workhouse, and asked me to go with him, and I did. And, by Jove, there was a case of a girl they told us had been brought-in in a cab—they didn't know where from, or anything about her; and she had had small-pox, and was just recovering. They didn't know her name, but they said it was quite a mysterious case, she seemed such a superior style of girl to have no friends."

James Trefusis was all life and energy again now. He sprang up, and began to stride away. The captain was walking towards them, and met him.

"Good-bye, capt'n; I'm going!"

"Going! What to Paris about the gun?"

"Curse the gun!" said James, very heartily, as he hurried off to the railway station.

That afternoon poor Marian, waked out of her weary slumber by the touch of a kindly hand, opened her eyes and found James Trefusis standing by her, clasping her hand in his. It was no surprise to her, for as she lay on that wretched pallet she had long dreamed of waking up some day like this, either in this world or the next, and finding her lover by her.

But then came the terrible recollection of her disfigurement. She buried her face in the pillow. It was not vanity, for she had never fancied herself good-looking; it was rather pity for James, and fear lest he should think she had changed as well as her features.

They spoke little to each other, for the matron and the master were present. James had had some difficulty in persuading them to let him enter, and they watched him closely, as if they fancied he wanted to steal something. So James could only tell her by what chance he had learnt where she was, and how he intended to have her removed at once to some comfortable lodgings where she would be well cared for. And then he bent over her hand and kissed it, and went away.

He lost no time in getting lodgings for

her. Fortunately, he had just been paid for some engineering work, and had a handsome sum of money by him. In a few days Marian was removed to her new home, where she was surrounded with every comfort he could think of for her. And as soon as she was settled he came to see her, and then heard for the first time all the story of her illness, and the full particulars of the brutal and heartless way in which the Orrs had turned her out.

Then he set to work to recover Marian's boxes, which he supposed were at the Orrs'. But the Orr household were prepared to swear in a body that Miss Carlyle's boxes had been sent away with her. Then he applied to the workhouse people, and they referred him to that active and intelligent officer, A 299. But A 299, though he clearly remembered all the circumstances of the case, had omitted to take down the cabman's number, and did not think he should be able to recognise him. James threatened to report him, and offered to bribe him, but to no effect. Marian's little all had vanished.

Then James bethought him of an artifice which succeeded admirably. He gave Marian

what he pretended was her salary paid by Mrs. Orr to him; and Marian, in the innocence of her heart, took it without a question, to his great delight.

There was no necessity now for the old captain to urge James to take the gun and submit it to a foreign Government. At the first mention of the idea, James declared his intention of going at once. He had made up his mind now—it was useless to go on in this way any longer, leaving poor Marian to struggle alone in the world. He must make money—as much money as possible—and then they would marry.

He packed up his travelling tackle and set out for Paris at once. But before he left he wrote a letter to Marian, telling her his plans.

James Trefusis had never loved Marian for her beauty. If she was lovely to him, it was only because her good qualities made her so, not from any consciousness as to whether her features were classic and regular, or piquant and peculiar. The result was that, beyond the fact that she looked ill and weak, he hardly noticed the change in her, or if he noticed it, at all events did not think it worthy of a moment's thought.

But his silence on this point distressed Marian. The consciousness of the change was so constantly present to her that she fancied if he did not mention it, it was because he dared not trust himself to refer to what was such a grief to him. She thought that he felt bound in honour to keep the promise he had made, but that he had ceased to love her.

This fancy was always before her, and made her constantly misrepresent James's words and actions. So that now, when he went off in such haste to Paris, and wrote to take leave, instead of coming to see her, she perceived in this, not his eagerness to overcome every obstacle to making her his, but his sad acquiescence in the results of his promise to marry her. He did not care to come and see her, but he wrote and took his leave, as in duty bound.

The more she brooded over this, the more she became convinced of its truth. He had ceased to love her, and yet was about to offer up his life, his prospects, his happiness, in a mistaken sense of honour. It must not be. She, too, could make her sacrifice. She did love him—fondly, deeply, unselfishly; and she must not let him bind himself in sor-

rowful loyalty to a woman who was no longer dear to him.

She had made up her mind as to the bitter step she must take! She suffered as only a woman can suffer for the sake of the man she loves. If it be agony to see all we hold dear slipping from our grasp, what torture, self-inflicted, must it be to turn resolutely away from it, never to see it again!

Here was this woman, with the accomplishment of the dream of her life within her reach. Yet, with a martyr's courage, she refused to drink of the happiness almost touching her lip. She fled from the blessing for which she had sighed so long, with a sore heart, and passionate weeping.

Meanwhile, James having procured all the letters of introduction and testimonials he required, set out for Paris. He had picked up the French language during his sojourn in that polyglot place, Bohemia, where he had been naturalised as a citizen of the world. He went out with great hope and high expectation, for he knew the French Emperor to be a wise and sagacious man, not all likely to let so excellent an invention slip. He knew him also to be, if not a

generous, at least not a niggardly paymaster. And then! Then home and happiness! He hoped to realise enough money by the invention to enable him to leave great, busy, bustling London for ever, to purchase some quiet corner in the country where he might live and die in peace and tranquil happiness.

As he leaned on the side of the steamer, gazing along the sun's track on the dancing waters, and pictured to himself a future path as golden and glorious as that, what was Marian doing?

She was getting stronger and better now. She was able to walk about a little, and could sit up. So she gathered together her few things, and packed them up, and left her lodgings. She would go away, and leave no trace behind—leave nothing behind but a short note, bidding him farewell. Then she would hide herself in some obscure corner of London, and there live and toil, and try to forget him. She had another task to do now, as soon as she was well enough. She must learn how Alice had fared. "Poor Alice, she must have wondered what had become of me. But I don't feel well enough to write to her to-day, after all the hurry of moving," said Marian, as she lay down in

her humble bed, in her new lodgings in Pentonville, where she had now determined to take up her quarters until she had quite recovered, and was well enough to seek another situation.

By-and-by she wrote to Alice, but received no answer. Then she grew alarmed, and as soon as she was strong enough, journeyed painfully over to Mayfair to inquire about her. The footman of whom she asked for her sister was a new arrival, and had to go down into the servants' hall to learn what she wished to know. And it so happened that Alice's old ally, Martha, was in the kitchen when he came down. When she heard what the inquiry was, she peeped up from the area, and at once guessed who Marian was. So she tripped up the area steps, and called to Marian to come to the gate. And then she told her how my lady had turned Alice away, "along of the Honnable Enery's a-falling in love with her." And that was all the information Marian could gather about her sister.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FORGING OF GOLD FETTERS.

I FEAR my readers will lose much of their interest in Henry Vorian when I tell them that as soon as he found that Alice was gone and had not answered his note he was rather relieved than otherwise. In some love affairs it is rather obstinacy than passion that is so long-lived. When your friends say, "Oh, it will be broken off before very long," a premium is held out for fidelity—just as, when an old man sees that his life is the slender barrier between his heir and his property, he generally feels inspired to prolong his existence in the most unreasonable manner. In attachments, a little opposition on the part of friends is like picking the blossoms of a geranium, say—it destroys the beauty of the plant perhaps, but it strengthens it considerably.

Lord and Lady Lacquoigne seemed to

have some intuitive perception of this, for as soon as the danger was removed by the dismissal of Alice, they tacitly received Henry Vorian into favour again—nay, perhaps were even more than usually gracious.

Meantime that gallant youth, deprived of the amusement which had served to occupy his spare time, grew to be bored by constant stopping at home, and at last, of his own accord, began to go into society again. As soon as he showed this inclination, his noble parents humoured it to the best of their power. They gave all sorts of entertainments, and went to great expense. If you had asked where was the money for this to be procured, echo in the groves of Beaudechet would have answered—like that creature which it most resembles, a "silent M.P."—"Here, here!" The Dryads had to suffer. My lord's steward was directed to sell some timber as promptly as possible, and many a gap in the dwindling avenues of the once noble park stood like a notch in a clog-almanack to represent some festal day at the mansion in Mayfair.

At all the gaieties which my lord and my lady provided, one family was constantly present. The Orrs were always invited, and

never failed to come. The yellow chariot was perpetually running to and fro between Grosvenor Place and Mayfair. The canary-coloured became very intimate with the Lacquoigne domestics.

But all this labour and expense seemed in vain. In vain my lord and my lady coupled Henry Vorian and pink-eyed Honoria Orr in a social leash. In vain Mr. and Mrs. Orr figuratively threw their daughter at the future nobleman's head; *he* didn't seem to see it, and *she* didn't seem to see it.

What was to be done? His lordship felt inclined to remonstrate with his son for refusing to let him have interest for this heavy investment in the matrimonial speculative line. But my lady was wiser, and counselled silence, patience, and an interview with Mr. Scrooby.

Accordingly, Mr. Scrooby was honoured by a visit from his lordship, who laid the matter before him, and asked his advice.

"You say, my lord," said Mr. Scrooby, leaning back in his chair, and fixing a contemplative eye on the hook in the middle of the ceiling where a chandelier had once hung; "you say, my lord, that the Honourable Henry must marry well on account of

his debts. Has your lordship any notion of their extent?"

"Well, no, Scrooby, I can't say I have; for I have purposely made it a rule to abstain from making inquiries about difficulties I could not assist him to meet."

"Very right, my lord. But at this time a little knowledge of the state of his affairs would be very useful."

"In what way, Scrooby?"

"My lord," said Scrooby, winking at the chandelier-hook, because he felt he ought not to take such a liberty with a nobleman; "my lord, I have a very pretty little scheme for bringing about this desirable consummation."

"By Jove, have you now? How devilish quick you've been about it! What a clever fellow you are, Scrooby — doosid clever! You ought to be in the House—you ought indeed, with your ability."

"I'm too clever to desire to enter it, my lord. But about this plan—it is very simple. It is on the principle of a battue. You want to flush your bird, so you set your beaters to work, and in a little while—whirr! up my gentleman goes, and you knock him over with this eligible match, having, of course,

taken out a licence for such sport at Doctors' Commons. Ha! ha! not a bad joke that, my lord, for a poor lawyer."

"Doosid good, doosid good," said my lord, quite in a fog as to the real meaning of this figurative language.

"Do you take what I mean, my lord?" asked Scrooby, observing the mystification of his noble client.

"Well, I'm cursed if I do, if it comes to that," said the other with candour.

"Let me explain to your lordship. What I should do in your case would be to buy up a few of the Honourable Henry's acceptances—press him for payment—get him into a corner for want of money, and then just offer him the chance of the young lady's hand and fortune; and if he don't jump at it, I'll be struck off the rolls for an incompetent ass."

"Gad! that's very clever, Scrooby—very clever. But what will it cost to buy up these acceptances? You see I've been laying out a good deal of money on this already."

"Well, I think, my lord, if you will permit me to say so, that the Honourable Henry's acceptances will not be a very

expensive purchase. If your lordship wishes it, I'll look about and get hold of a few."

"Yes, but you know, Scrooby, it won't do for us to be pressing him. He knows"——

"Oh, bless you, my lord, I'm not such a fool as to appear in the matter at all. I can get a little Hebrew of my acquaintance to play the part of Shylock, 'his original character,' as the playbills say, so as to corner the Honourable Henry, without waking a single suspicion."

His lordship gave Scrooby the necessary instructions, and that shrewd man of business set about his little plan at once. He delighted in such small strokes of finesse—legal niceties, he called them. It was not long before he discovered quite a nest of the Honourable Harry Vorian's acceptances. They had all got into the hands of one man, who probably got them at a reduction on taking the quantity, though they were cheap enough under any circumstance, I should think, being quoted very low in the market. The speculator who had collected them was not very elate with his bargain, and was, in fact, rather in the position of those who have greatness thrust upon them. He didn't want so many autographs of the heir

of Lacquoigne, but they somehow seemed to have a tendency to fall into his hands. The *Milvus Regalis* of natural history is not a gregarious bird, I believe, but the common kite of the discounting naturalist is given to fly in flocks.

Mr. Scrooby purchased a few specimens of this interesting tribe, and caged them in a tin box in his office until the arrival of his Jewish friend, who may be described as a financial bird-fancier, not only for the sake of carrying out the natural historical figure I have fallen into, but because he really looked like what a bird-fancier should be, if there be any truth in the allegation that a man becomes assimilated to his profession. To judge this Israelite according to this maxim, from the length of talon and crookedness of beak, one would set him down as a seller, not exactly of doves, but of vultures and carrion birds generally.

As he stood in Scrooby's office, with his bald head a little on one side, with his small eyes twinkling, and his shoulders elevated to his ears like folded pinions, he might well have stood for the Darwinian development of a very acquisitive buzzard or bald-headed vulture, watching the death-struggle of some

unfortunate animal, with hungry interest. The resemblance was so striking that when Scrooby explained that after all the acceptances were not to be used really to smash up the Hon. Captain Vorian, the Hebrew looked quite disappointed, and gave such a croak of remonstrance as one would expect from a bird of prey that sees the dinner it has been counting upon carried off by a scavenger.

A few days after this interview of Mr. Scrooby with Mr. Slowman, Henry Vorian began to find that if "curses, like chickens, come home to roost," those other curses, kites, are not less certain to come back to the place whence they started. He heard for the first time of the existence of a certain Mr. Levy Slowman, and learnt that after many years spent in rendering pecuniary assistance to his distressed fellow-creatures at fifty per cent., that generous person was about to retire from the active practice of benevolence at a lucrative rate of interest, and was therefore anxious to come to some arrangement with the Honourable Captain Vorian with regard to some paper of his which had come into the beneficent Hebrew's hands.

Henry Vorian, with a strange want of comprehension of this generous being's nature, got into a state of alarm and apprehension. He struggled to extricate himself from the friendly clutches, like an improvident blue-bottle kicking to get out of the web of some discounting spider. But it was all in vain. His efforts to extricate himself only involved him more and more hopelessly in the meshes. At last, exhausted by his great exertions, he lay quite still, waiting for his destroyer to begin sucking his lifeblood. Yet the destroyer seemed to be in no hurry. The suspense was agony to Henry Vorian; but he little knew how agonising it was to his tormentor too, or he would have been perhaps a little consoled.

Poor Slowman must have felt like one of those cormorants trained by the Chinese to catch fish. The poor bird pursues his finny prey by instinct, pounces on it, and, bringing it to the surface, proceeds to swallow it; but the cruel ingenuity of John Chinaman steps in here, and by putting a close-fitting brass ring round the bird's neck, incapacitates the unhappy cormorant from the crowning act of his performance. His enjoyment of the

fish can never be anything beyond the mere tickling of his æsophagus with its nose. To bolt it is out of his power.

Scrooby had put a figurative brass ring round the gullet of this Jewish cormorant, and the hungry creature stood with Captain Vorian over head and shoulders in his debt and in his maw, and yet he might not bolt him.

"Torment him as much as you like—put the screw on all but the last turn," said Lord Lacquoigne's lawyer; and the vindictive Slowman made the most of the permission. The result was, as might be expected, that Henry Vorian at last was driven to speak to his father.

My lord was—instructed by my lady—rather cold and impracticable at first. "He regretted—he feared—he deplored"—in short, he did everything except what Henry wanted. He did not offer to aid. At length driven to the point by his father's indifference, the captain asked for assistance.

"My dear Henry," said his lordship, gravely, "I think I remember telling you, during an interview which I will not pain you by referring to further, that I had your brothers and sisters to provide for."

"You did, sir," answered Henry, moodily.

"I then gave you the best counsel I could, but you did not think fit to regard it in a proper spirit; and you must therefore excuse me if I decline to obtrude advice where it is not appreciated."

"I shall not only appreciate but be deeply grateful for your advice now, sir."

"I can only repeat the advice I gave then. A young man of birth and position must marry a wealthy wife, if he wishes to take his right place. If he has become involved in debt, the necessity for doing so is still more imperative."

Henry Vorian confessed to himself that there was a great deal of truth in that.

"Few young men have such excellent opportunities as you have of making a good match. The intimate relations subsisting between us and the Orrs give you advantages——"

"But she's so confoundedly ugly; and there's nothing in her."

"All the better. Girls with nothing in them are less trouble to manage; and as for good looks, a man who marries for beauty marries for a very shortlived inducement; whereas a man who marries a girl with

money is investing to advantage, for it will be in his power to increase that fortune by good management. As to beauty, it's cheap enough, and there's plenty of it about."

Henry Vorian began to think that, after all, his father knew best, and the advice he gave was very sound. But just at this moment a certain recollection flashed across him, and he looked a little blank.

"What's the objection now?" asked his lordship, observing the alteration.

"Well, you see—why, the fact is, you see—why, unluckily, in the heat of the moment, after the interview which you spoke of just now, I wrote a letter to—to that—the young lady in question, in which I pledged myself in a manner which might be—a—a—awkward, in case I married again—I mean anybody else!"

"Oh, you wrote a letter, did you, making a formal promise of marriage, eh?"

"Yes, I think it might have amounted to that."

"And you wish you hadn't now, don't you?"

Henry Vorian was compelled to admit that he could have wished the letter recalled.

"Then I'm afraid," said his lordship, "that marriage is out of the question as a means of extricating you from your difficulties; and yet I candidly tell you I see no other way."

Henry Vorian frowned, and bit his lip savagely.

"The mere rumour that you were engaged to Mr. Orr's eldest daughter would at once silence your creditors. Don't you think it would?"

"Beyond a doubt."

"I suppose you heartily wish you had never written that foolish letter?"

"Well—yes, I do."

"You'd like to destroy it?"

Henry nodded.

"There it is, then," said my lord, throwing the letter over to him.

Henry Vorian started as if a bombshell had fallen at his feet.

"How on earth did you become possessed of this?"

"Your mother bought it of the girl when she was going away. She consented to discount it; it was rather expensive."

Now this, as we know, my dear reader, was what I must take the liberty of calling

"a lie," although it was told by a lord. But I hope and believe that his lordship soared to fiction just this once in order to shield her ladyship, who had really abstracted the letter from the letter-box. That act was nothing more or less than petty larceny, and perhaps his lordship thought that a nobleman did not so much lose caste by telling a lie as committing a theft. For my part, I can see very little difference between the two acts.

Henry Vorian was too pleased to get back a letter which he had for some time admitted to himself was an injudicious one, to make too nice inquiries as to how it came into his father's possession. He accepted his lordship's account without question, and felt reason to be grateful that he had got off so cheaply, considering what a mercenary creature Miss Carlyle must have been to part with that letter in order to realise a little sum of money!

From this time Captain Henry Vorian began to pay the usual sort of attentions to Miss Orr; and she accepted them. By-and-by it was an understood thing that the young people were not to be interfered with. Then came the proposal and acceptance. After these followed the interviews of parents and

the sketching of the settlements. Last of all came the marriage.

It was a rule in the composition of the tragic drama of the classics that all terrible things should be done behind the scenes, and not on the stage; and if Medea was forbidden by the etiquette of the Dramatic Authors' Society in the time of Horace to kill her children close to the footlights—if Atreus was not permitted to perform his cannibal cuisine anywhere within the limits between P. and O. P.—if Procne was not allowed to go through her transformation scene into a dove publicly, and Cadmus was strictly prohibited from turning into a serpent visibly and to soft music—why should a novelist be suffered to harrow his readers by the description of a human sacrifice?

I, for one, won't attempt it. But standing C., and looking off, after the wont of that garrulous party the Chorus of Greek Drama, I will inform you that I see carriages with gray horses, and postilions with white rosettes, outside Mr. Orr's house in Grosvenor Place—that I see a solemn procession made to a temple in the neighbourhood of Hanover Square, at which temple the human sacrifice is gone through amid much weeping of

women and general depression and misery—that I see, on their return to Mr. Orr's, a great pagan feast, at which the party undergo the slow torture of hearing and making speeches—that I see more tears and hysterics and faintings; and that the *Times* of the next day announces the union of the heir to the Lacquoigne title and the daughter of Mr. Orr, M.P. and millionaire.

But I do hope you will give me credit, though I jest at this wedding, for an opinion on the subject of such marriages, which is by no means a thing to be laughed at. If there be a proof wanted of the depravity of the human heart and the godlessness of our boasted civilisation, I should look for it in the spectacle of two people standing before the altar and taking part in that touching and most solemn marriage ceremony—professing an affection they do not feel, vowing vows they do not intend to keep, and joining hands where God has not joined the hearts!

CHAPTER XV.

SINKING LOWER.

ONE morning, when Alice had been at Miss Delamere's about a month, she was arranging the windows, with Miss Delamere in the background, out of sight, superintending. All at once she became conscious that some one who was standing outside was looking at her intently. Raising her eyes to discover who it could be—for the feeling was not a pleasant one—she beheld Captain Cormack!

The surprise was mutual. Captain Cormack was strolling by the shop, and, seeing several girls in the window, devoted a few minutes to an inspection of their points, to their great amusement, and the consternation and anger of Miss Delamere. When he saw Alice engaged in such an employment, his astonishment was indeed great.

His first impulse, very naturally, was to

walk into the shop, and shake hands with Alice; and she, delighted to see an old friend, and quite forgetful of Delamere deportment, came forward and greeted him warmly. But the interview did not last long, for Alice suddenly woke to a sense of her position and a knowledge of what Miss Delamere would think of "such forward ways." Thereupon she huddled the captain out of the shop, and begged him to go away. But he did not consent to this until he had learnt at what time she left business, and how far she lived from the shop. He promised to be close at hand to escort her home, and have a long talk with her.

When he was gone, Alice had to suffer for her imprudence. All the vials of Miss Delamere's wrath were poured on her devoted head. Captain Cormack's impudent inspection of her shop girls had not predisposed that lady in his favour; and she had, moreover, a pretty extensive experience, and had little difficulty in estimating his character from his manner and appearance. So she came into action with all her guns loaded to the muzzle, and delivered such broadsides of invective against poor Alice that the unhappy girl was beaten in a minute. She could only

say that the gentleman was a very old friend of her father's, and had not seen her for years.

"Well, it's my opinion, Miss Carlyle," said Miss Delamere, severely, "if he had never seen you at all, it would be all the better, for I'm sure he is not the right sort of man for a young and interesting girl to have much to do with. I disapprove of my young ladies having male acquaintances—especially such as him—and most especially I won't have them receiving callers in my shop! Understand that clearly, Miss Carlyle. If this occurs again, you and I must part."

As ill-luck would have it, Miss Delamere was reaching a bonnet out of the window that evening when Captain Cormack came to wait until Alice left. Miss Delamere said nothing, though she was angry enough, for he had the audacity to favour her with a passing leer as he went by. She waited until Alice left, and then watched her until she joined Captain Cormack, and they walked away arm-in-arm.

Alice's taste and refinement had been strong recommendations to Miss Delamere; but the honour of her reputation was that

lady's paramount anxiety; so she quietly determined to get some one to supply Alice's place as speedily as possible, and in the meantime made up her mind to watch and say nothing.

In the interval between his meeting with Alice in the morning and his return in the evening, Captain Cormack had had ample time to reflect and lay his plans. One thing was very plain to him. Marian could not have told Alice that she had suspected him of being more or less instrumental in causing her father's death. He must find out how much she had really told Alice.

When Alice came out of the shop, he joined her, and, offering his arm, begged to be allowed to see her home. She very innocently consented; and so they wandered off, to the horror, as we have seen, of the respectable Miss Delamere, and the forfeiture of Alice's situation.

Henry Cormack opened the conversation by artfully inquiring about Marian, and was very delighted to hear that Alice had lost sight of her. He then began to sound her carefully as to the extent to which Marian had gone in her description of his conduct, and he took the opportunity of regretting that

his good intentions had been so sadly misconstrued. It was his object, he explained to Alice, to get the business clearly and entirely into his own hands on her father's death, in order that the creditors of her father might understand that that property was not liable for his debts. When he had once established that, he meant to restore them the half-share in the business. He complained that all his friendly schemes were frustrated by their secret and sudden departure, and expressed a hope that Alice would allow him to remove the unfavourable impression of him which her sister had conveyed to her.

He found, to his delight, that Alice had heard little, if anything, of what he had said and done in his interview with Marian, and he was a little flattered to find that the impression he had once made on Alice was quite susceptible of being worked upon.

From that day he was always hovering about Miss Delamere's shop, and never once missed the hour of closing, when he escorted Alice home.

Alice was pretty well teased by her shop-companions about "the swell with a moustache," and did not altogether dislike it. She was flattered by Henry Cormack's

attention, and her friendless condition made her all the more ready to cling to the memory of better days which was embodied in his devotion. Henry Cormack saw all this, and, like the villain he was, determined to profit by it. And the respectable and rigorous Miss Delamere—let us hope quite unintentionally—played into his hands. For one day she intimated to Alice that the character of her shop, which had ever stood very high with her customers and her neighbours, was suffering by such extraordinary conduct as Alice was guilty of, in allowing a young man to wait for her, evening after evening, and walk away with her. The scandal such behaviour had given rise to was quite awful, and the hitherto unblemished reputation of Miss Delamere's model establishment was in danger. "Miss Carlyle must leave at once." Thereupon Alice was shown to the door, and departed in an utter state of bewilderment and distress.

"What had she done? What could she do? To whom could she go for advice?" To whom, alas, but the man who had been the cause of this. He came to her lodgings that night. He had watched and waited when Miss Delamere's establishment was

closed, and had come to the conclusion that she was ill, and therefore called to inquire after her health.

Alice told him what had happened, whereupon he feigned great grief and anger. But inwardly he was rejoiced. Chance, in this instance, had revealed to him the course he must adopt to obtain his wicked end. By doing of *malice prepense* what he had accidentally done in this case, he would be able to shut all respectable employment against Alice. It was a splendid device, and he was, no doubt, duly grateful to his friend and ally, the devil, for suggesting it.

He lost no time in carrying on his scheme. Under the pretence of wishing to talk over with Alice what might be done to get her some employment, he contrived to induce her to admit him to her lodgings. They had been standing talking at the door for some time, and they could consider the case to greater advantage within.

He thought it advisable to tell Alice that he was profoundly grieved to think that just at the time when he could have been of service to her, he had reduced himself almost to beggary by a mining speculation;—and he described the state of Wheal Cormack, with

such additions and suppressions — for instance of its success—as he deemed necessary. He had mortgaged the foundry, and was nearly penniless, he told her, but he hoped before long to be able to recover the blow. Until then she must manage to get a living somehow, but he assured her his first good fortune should be shared by her.

He stayed for about half an hour, and then left, promising to call next day, when he hoped to be able to offer her something in the shape of employment.

No sooner had the door closed on him, than Alice's landlady made her appearance. Very red and angry she looked, and she spoke loud—and Alice's heart sank within her.

"No, never had such goings on took place in her house afore, nor never should. To think of a young unmarried female arsking of a gentleman into her room, which it was not a thing she would do herself was it ever so, not for thousands. And suit herself she must, which the sooner the better, and might go to-morrow, and not a shilling should be arsked for the three days; for though poor she would rather be respectable than make ever so much money as she

couldn't look in the face of, and say as it was earned respectable."

With more volubility than intelligibility, the worthy laundress beset Alice without ceasing, except to divert the torrent of her wrath for the benefit of her daughter, who had first brought Alice to the house.

The girl was as much horrified at Alice's indiscretion as her mother, and kept aloof from her quondam friend, so that when Mrs. Smart had finished her harangue, Alice was left all alone to bewail her fate, and cry herself to sleep as best she might.

The next day Captain Cormack called, but was received at the door by the laundress in person, and upbraided for daring to darken that respectable piece of timber. He was a little unprepared for such an outburst, but he soon recovered himself, and gave the good woman a rating in return.

Alice came out in bonnet and shawl in the midst of the tumult; and so the field was left with Mrs. Smart, the captain accompanying Alice for a walk.

When he learnt what had occurred after his departure, he was exceedingly pained, he said. But he feared they should have to bear much trouble, and suffer from such

misapprehension frequently. Would Alice allow him to go and look about for apartments for her?—it would be easier for him, as a man to get such a lodging as she required. In the meantime she could employ herself in endeavouring to find employment.

They separated on the understanding that they should meet next day in the park—Alice fixing on the old rendezvous—and report progress to each other.

For two days Captain Cormack declared himself unable to find such lodgings as Alice required. He said that almost universal objection was taken on his stating that he wished to call to see her occasionally, although he was no relation.

"You see, Alice, I thought it was best to tell the truth, but I'm afraid one doesn't get any good by it." It was not often that Henry Cormack was a martyr on that ground.

At last, on the third day, he professed to have met with a chance of rooms such as might suit Alice. But there was one slight objection to them.

"You see, my dear Alice, people are so confoundedly wicked in their extra goodness that they will see harm where there is none

—and so I have had all this difficulty about getting you a lodging, just because, as a friend of your father's and your own, I wish to watch over your welfare as far as lies in my power. And this house is the only one where no objection was raised. But then, unfortunately, every good has its corresponding evil, and as they don't object to our arrangements, so they are not very particular about other people. And the fact is that there is a French opera dancer residing in the same house. Of course you needn't know her or see her—although I believe there is nothing really to be said against her. But continental people are so different from us, and there's a prejudice against theatrical people. You know, of course, my dear girl, that the memory of old times and my love for your father is a sufficient guarantee against my exposing you to anything you ought to be guarded against. But you can keep quite secluded, and I shall be at hand to see that you are safe."

Alice was beginning to lose courage and spirit, and her only hope and trust lay in this man now. So she allowed him to decide for her, and the next day left her quiet, clean little room in the poor street, for a dingy parlour in

a pretentious row of houses in Chelsea. She was quite surprised at the low rent she had to pay;—she did not know that Captain Cormack had made an arrangement with the landlady to pay the difference between the real rent and what he told her it was. Alice saw nothing of the opera dancer, who kept rather late hours (which was not her fault, because theatres *are* late places), and who, being sprung of a volatile nation, was noisy as French people will be at times.

In the meantime poor Alice had hunted high and low in search of employment, but in vain. It is difficult at any time for a woman to find work when she has an excellent character. But Miss Delamere refused to allow Alice to refer any one to her, and the result was that, thanks to this rigorously virtuous and respectable woman, all paths save one were becoming closed against Alice.

When Captain Cormack had seen Alice fairly settled in her new abode, he told her he must run down into Cornwall for a week, in order to see how his business was going on; but he begged her to let him lend her a small sum of money—he had just been paid a debt rather unexpectedly—and he forced a few pounds on her. When he left

the house that day there was an evil smile on his face.

"Let's see how it will work! I'll leave her there a bit by herself. Let's see how it will work!"

CHAPTER XVI.

"ADIEU FOR EVERMORE, MY LOVE!"

WITH his heart filled with delightful dreams of the future—visions of bliss, and peace, and home with the woman who at that very moment was flying from him, James Trefusis cared little for the thousand and one delights which Paris, the queen of cities, offers to its visitors. He hardly noted its beauties, as he hurried along the splendid boulevards, as busy and thoughtful as if he had been hastening along Fleet Street or Cheapside. I think if Charlie Crawhall could have seen this incivility to the fair city he would never have forgiven James; for Charlie's notions of an earthly Paradise were embodied in bewitching Paris.

"By Jove, Jim," he said, as he shook his friend by the hand on his departure for France, "I'm a contented chap, as a rule, and break the tenth commandment as sel-

dom as any man, but I do envy you your trip to Paris. Ah! that life out of doors, those piquant little dinners at the restaurant, so cheap and so nice; those charming theatres, those exquisite toilettes, those noble streets, and that glorious climate. Egad, whenever I come back from Paris I feel just as the fairies at the theatres must feel when the transformation scene's over, and they doff tinsel and wings for ragged bonnets and shawls. I feel as if I ceased to be a nobleman, and fell to a beggar—as if I quitted a land where all is prosperity, for one where the people are dressed like scarecrows!"

Little did Charlie guess the truth when he indulged over his pipe of an evening in conjectures of what James was doing, and how he was enjoying himself.

For James had a purpose, and when a man has that before him he does not stop to watch butterflies, or to smell flowers, or to admire landscapes, but just pushes straight on.

He found, at the commencement of his task, that after all he had some difficulties to overcome even here. French Government bureaus were, he discovered, not so very

unlike English Government offices. But there was this difference in France, that he could appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober—from a bureaucrat intoxicated with a little power, to the clear, cool head of a really clever man—one who had all the advantages and none of the drawbacks of porphyrogeniture; for he was born to wealth and position, but educated in poverty and obscurity. It is not every one who, equally fortunate in his birthright, is as lucky in his schoolmasters as Napoleon III.

In spite, therefore, of a little unavoidable delay at the outset, James at last succeeded in drawing attention to his wares, which were just the sort of wares to please the ruler of an intensely military nation. The gun was seen and approved in theory, and it was resolved that it should be tested. James was to superintend the construction of a gun on these principles at the Government factories.

This was naturally a work of time, for the construction needed nicety and precision, and the workmen were not very apt. It is curious to observe how a really intelligent mechanic seems thrown out of his element—becomes almost useless when you take him

out of the peculiar groove in which he has been accustomed to work for any length of time.

Labour is conservative, and it is an extremely difficult task to prevail on any workmen—no matter what their particular occupation is—to depart even a hair's breadth from the long-established but often foolish traditions of their trade.

But in spite of this, and the further fact that his being an Englishman did not assist him in enlisting their sympathies and stimulating their exertions, James at length contrived to get his men into working trim, and finally cast the gun with considerable success.

Then came the trial, which took place almost privately, and was fair though searching. The result was so far satisfactory that the gun was to be tested in comparison with other approved cannon in use in the French service. Out of this ordeal, too, the Trefusis gun came with flying colours, James being even complimented on the excellence of his invention by the Emperor himself.

Then came the negotiations for the purchase of the invention. There was no

niggardliness or bargain-driving in the offer made to James, but yet he was very disinclined to accept it, for one of the stipulations of the purchase was that he was to remain in Paris for a couple of years—at a handsome salary, to be sure—in order to superintend the construction of the gun, and teach the workmen at the Government factories.

But the condition was so obviously fair and rational under the circumstances of the case, that James could not demur. So he made up his mind to accept the terms and undertake the duties. He could easily obtain leave of absence to run over to England, where he could marry Marian, and bring her over to Paris with him.

It took him, of course, some time to get his men sufficiently *au fait* with their work to allow of his leaving them even for a short time. But French artisans are quick and intelligent, and he was not so long as he had expected in getting his factory into good working order.

Then he applied for a short leave of absence, and hastened over to England. He had written frequently to Marian, but none of his letters had elicited an answer. At first he fancied she might be very busy—then he feared she might be very ill—finally

he became most anxious and alarmed at her silence, not knowing how he could account for it.

Immediately on his arrival in London, he hurried off to the lodgings where he had left Marian. A vague, indescribable prescience of evil struck him as he stood at the door of the house, after knocking. A diminutive and dirty servant girl presently opened the door.

"Is Miss Carlyle at home?" asked James.

"There ain't no such pusson 'ere," was the answer, spoken somewhat angrily, for your London Cinderella objects to being summoned to the door without reason—and no wonder, for she is sufficiently worked off her legs without having to run on bootless errands.

"Stop a moment," said James, promptly putting his foot in the door to prevent the girl's closing it, for she did not wait a minute after giving her reply.

"I'll call the p'lice, if you don't go along. I know yer ways. But you ain't agoin' to have them coats and umbrellers, young man; so you'd better 'ook it," said Cinderella, still struggling to shut him out.

"Confound the girl! Don't be such a

fool! Where's your mistress?" expostulated James.

"Oh, she's downstairs, and I ain't a-goin' to fetch her unless you let me shut the door."

But this James objected to do, for he argued—and perhaps justly—that the door once closed, Cinderella would dismiss him and his desires from her mind.

"Well, call her then, you stupid girl."

Thereupon the grimy domestic, pitching her voice in a shrill pervading key, shrieked "Please 'm y'r wanted!"

At this summons the landlady ascended from the kitchen, and to her James quickly made his errand intelligible. She remembered him, and apologised to him for the servant's behaviour, which she excused on the ground that she was a new comer.

James said the girl was quite right, and was only doing her duty in seeing after the safety of her mistress's property; but he admitted it had made matters a little awkward for him. Then he inquired for Marian.

"Law, sir! there; I thought you must have seen the lady again by this time. Bless you, she left here soon as ever she was well

enough to move about. I had a note here for you for several weeks, sir, in case you called, but as you didn't come, I supposed you'd seen the lady herself. I'm afraid I burnt it, or else I've put it away somewhere, but where I can't recall. But if you don't mind stepping in and taking a seat in the parlour, I'll look and see if I can find it."

"Did Miss Carlyle leave her address?" James inquired.

"No, sir, that she didn't. I asked her for it in case of letters, but she said none wouldn't come, and if they did they would not be very pressing, and she'd call for them. But she never has, and I've got several waiting for her that came from foreign parts."

"Have you no idea where she was going? Didn't you hear the direction she gave the cabman?"

"Well, I did listen to try and hear, but bless you, sir, she told him to drive in the direction of King's Cross, which, this being Bayswater, is rather wide, and you might spend a good deal of time between the two places in searching of her out."

"How strange! She gave you no reason for going?"

"None in the world, sir, but it was no fault in the lodgings, for she told me as much herself. But may be, sir, it will all be in that letter to you, so won't you just step in and take a chair while I hunt for it? for I'm pretty near persuaded that I shouldn't have burnt such a thing."

James accepted the invitation, and sat in the good woman's parlour while she prosecuted a vigorous search for the missing letter. If he had been in a mood to be amused, he would have found endless fun in the ransacking of old hoards which ensued. It was clear that, when she suggested that she might have burnt the letter, she was inventing an excuse in case she could not find it in her curious collection of odds and ends. She was not the sort of woman to burn any scrap of paper, no matter how valueless really. The places in which she had secret stores of bills and letters were innumerable. Papers were hidden in teapots and chimney ornaments. They were brought up after energetic plunges from the depths of China jars. They burst out as if from repression and captivity whenever a drawer was opened. They fluttered out of every cupboard. They came out rather flattened and creased from

beneath the sofa cushion—rather dusty and crumpled from behind books on the shelves. They were disentangled from the threads and worsteds of a rather disorderly workbox. They were to be found even in the tea-caddy. They dropped out of the family Bible when it was held up by the two covers, and would have done the same from almost every other book in the place, if one might judge from the bulgy and gaping appearance of most of the volumes. The looking-glass was stuck full of them.

"I must have a burn some of these days," said the landlady apologetically, after revealing some more than ordinarily gigantic accumulation in some very unexpected and unsuitable receptacle; "but you see it is so unsafe unless you go through them careful, receipts being very valuable, through persons coming only too often for their bills twice over—not always intentionally dishonest; but that don't matter to you, so long as you have to pay over again."

This was the secret of the good woman's magpie-hoard of useless paper! She did not like to burn anything in the shape of manufactured rag for fear of destroying a receipt. But, as a result, any one of her



tea-urn. Promptly inverting this image, the landlady plunged her hand into the pedestal, and drew forth a letter, which on inspection turned out to be the very one she was in search of. Mary Magdalen having been restored to her normal position, the letter was delivered to James.

He opened it with a trembling hand, and read as follows :—

"My dear, very dear James—

"Your noble and generous conduct touches me to the heart, and I cannot do otherwise than strive to emulate the self-sacrifice you propose. I cannot but feel that my disfigurement must be the death-blow of the love I have so little deserved, and I admire you more than ever for the kindness which spared to tell me of the change, and for the heroism which would have adhered to an engagement that you considered with a mistaken sense of honour was still binding on you.

"You are free, dear! This poor scarred, disfigured creature, is not the woman to whom you plighted faith. Farewell!

"This wrings my heart. But in leaving you unfettered, and hiding my existence where you can never find me, I am following your example—and I know no better example. I am doing my duty.

"But I shall take away with me the comfort of the recollection of your goodness and your love. You have been far better to me always than I deserved. When I was well off and you were poor, I had not the sense to know your worth or the courage to show my apprecia-

tion of it. When our places were changed, you shamed me with your noble conduct. You must not humble me more. You must not humble yourself more.

"You must forget—and yet I don't wish you to forget me utterly. So think of the Marian Carlyle you once loved—the girl who died of small-pox in the hospital. Forget only the living corpse you pitied for the sake of the dead. Forget the wretched, loathsome, disfigured creature that should be resting in the grave—that should have been buried, so as not to haunt your loyal heart with the semblance—the mockery of one you loved.

"Good-bye. God bless you! Don't try to find me, for you cannot succeed. I always pray for you.

"Yours; yet yours no longer,

"MARIAN."

When James Trefusis read that, his heart died within him.

CHAPTER XVII.

"AN INTERVAL OF SEVERAL YEARS IS SUPPOSED TO ELAPSE."

THE dramatic device for avoiding the dull recital of not very interesting or not very important events, is one that may be adopted now and then by a novelist with advantage. Indeed, if he desire to be truthful and yet to spare his readers much dry unnecessary detail, he must have recourse to this method. For, with all deference to fair Rosalind and her illustrious literary parent, Time is too great a personage to be bound down by strict rules, and therefore her catalogue of his paces is not entirely reliable. There are seasons when he seems to fold his wings and take a nap, with his head resting on his hour-glass for a pillow, the which being laid horizontally, its sands cease to flow. And yet these dozes are not less often taken in the sun than in the shade.

He sleeps over our happiness, as he sleeps over our misery, utterly careless in his lofty nature whether we weep or laugh during his period of repose. To be sure, there is some reason for thinking he seems to go more slowly with the wretched, because when our skies are clouded by sorrow there is no shadow cast on the dial for us to watch wearily as it creeps slowly on. But then, even in the high bright noon of our prosperity, there seems now and then to arise some Joshua of circumstance to bid the sun stand still and arrest the crawling shadow. With all deference to Rosalind, then, I fancy Time halts with the happy and the miserable alike, and sleeps over our joys and our griefs indifferently.

At this period of my story, Time, if he be not actually nodding, is at all events making such slow progress with my characters, one and all, glad or sad, that we must, if you please, take a leap, and resume the thread of the story later.

But we may as well take a glance in passing to see whether, in the different cases of the characters in this story, he is making sorrows drag heavily, or perpetuating joys while he takes his forty winks.

With a newly-married couple like the Honourable Henry and Mrs. Vorian, of course he is reposing in the gentle radiance of a honeymoon. Well, I'm not so sure about that. When Mr. Orr bartered away his daughter, he made it a special stipulation that her husband should retire from the army. He had no notion of his girl being dragged about from one station to another, as soldiers' wives must submit to be at all times. So Henry Vorian sold his commission, and became an idler man than ever—a man without even a pretence of employment. He spent much of his time at home; and as neither he nor Honoria knew enough of each other to take any interest in each other's tastes or pursuits, they bored one another to death.

The Honourable Honoria Vorian, I must tell you, was a very different person from plain Miss Honoria Orr. She had sold herself for a title, and she meant to enjoy her purchase. Her father had secured her interests in the marriage settlements, and to a great extent her husband was her dependent. She made him feel this, and prolonged into her married life the element of commerce which had distinguished her

courtship. Every sum of money that Henry drew from his wife's coffers was obtained for value received. When he wished to spend a few pounds, his wife insisted on realising a little of her dignity. She must go to the opera in state, or she must give an entertainment, or be taken to this or that noble house. She was a miser of the position she had purchased, and delighted to feast her pink eyes on it at every possible opportunity. How delighted she was whenever she had an opportunity of taking precedence of people to whom as Miss Orr she had had to defer. Henry Vorian, we know, had never cared very much for society; and so he and his wife parted company in this direction very early, and soon after marriage had come tacitly to the understanding that each was to take the way that seemed pleasant to each, and neither was to interfere with the other—a charming arrangement enough in a general way, but not such an arrangement as should be made between two people whom a holy decree has pronounced to be one.

Did Mr. and Mrs. Orr perceive this, and were they at all distressed at so fatal a portent for their child's future happiness?

Not they. The miserable old man was still earning his gold by the sweat of his brow, and was proud of having invested his flesh and blood so well. He had been accustomed to speak of his daughter as "Norey" in old times, but now never—even when time was of importance to him—did he speak of her otherwise than as "The Honourable Mrs. Vorian—the future Lady Lacquoigne, you know." As for Mrs. Orr, that phrase was so constantly recurring in her poor vulgar talk, that the echoes of the mansion in Grosvenor Place seemed to be perpetually repeating "The Honourable Mrs. Henry Vorian, Lady Lacquoigne as is to be." She did not think that there was any ill omen in the early coldness and indifference which sprang up between her child and Henry Vorian.

So Henry Vorian goes to races, and frequents his club, and is seen at less reputable places than these at times. And the Honourable Mrs. Vorian goes to the opera, and moves in the best society, and does not, you may be sure, lack a few devoted cavaliers, who hover about her and run on her errands, despite the fact that late hours don't improve pink eyes, and evening dresses do not

heighten the effect of bony charms. But what can such slight imperfections as these do to mar the worth of a golden image?

Mr. Orr continues to visit Babel Court in the City, where gold appears to shower in upon him as if he were a lovely Danäe, instead of a stout, coarse, repulsive, elderly gentleman. Has he discovered the philosopher's stone, and, does he spend his time in that dingy office in transmuting the duller metals into golden ingots? Or has he made a bargain with the gnomes or the fairies for the enjoyment of untold riches? I cannot say. But if the latter, I think we may look for a time when the elves' gift will be revoked, or the charm broken by his crossing running water, in which case all his wealth will be changed into withered leaves or pebbles.

Mrs. Orr continues to hoard the gold her husband makes. How surprised she would be to open her store some day, and find only a collection like the sweepings of a gravel walk, instead of the precious metal!

You must pardon these little fanciful digressions and childish allusions to fairy legends. As we have agreed to consider Chronos asleep for the nonce, there can be no waste of time in trifling a little just by

way of change. And it does seem so funny to fancy the very matter-of-fact and commonplace Orrs affected by such fairy foolery!

Lord and Lady Lacquoigne profited by their son's marriage. The aristocratic nose was not long in hitting off the right scent. My lady discovered her daughter-in-law's weakness, and turned it to account. She was always saying that she and my lord had not long to live now, and she only regretted that they could not leave Beaudechet in a fitter state of repair for the occupation of Henry and his wife.

"You, my dear Honoria, are wealthy, and the old honours and the old influence of the family will revive when you come to the title, and I wish we could make the place more worthy of its coming prosperity."

On this hint Honoria was not slow in acting. Without the least delicacy she began to look on Beaudechet as her own, and was always planning alterations and improvements. Of course my lord was put forward to the world as doing all this, and of course his dutiful daughter-in-law supplied him with the funds to carry out the plans. Also, of course, the affectionate father-in-law and the affectionate mother-in-law took a percentage, and made

Honoria pay heavily, though unconsciously, for her prospective enjoyment of the estate.

Let us turn from this fascinating family group to our other people.

James Trefusis is a prosperous man and a disappointed man. He is prosperous because the French Government has purchased his invention, and paid him nobly for it. (I may mention here that some of the first iron lips that spoke freedom for the people of Italy, on the plains of Piedmont, were the mouths of guns made on the Trefusis model.) He is a disappointed man because the woman for whose sake only he values his success and its tangible results has passed away from his ken like a spectre.

How he has watched and waited, how he has searched and schemed to find any trace of her would take too long to tell. But a silver thread here and there in his dark hair speaks plainly what he has suffered. He has learnt patience now. He has plucked endurance out of the heart of despair, and waits, scarcely hoping, yet not entirely desponding. His success with the French Government is acknowledged by all scientific and practical men to be nothing more than he deserves. The merit of his invention is

recognised everywhere, save in that incomprehensible Ordnance Office, where Ledbitter, and Sanders, and Tattifer are still impervious. The result is, that James has ample employment thrust upon him in spite of his reluctance; and this is the saving of him, because, no matter how stale, flat, and unprofitable life may be to a man like this man, he cannot but take an interest in the fit work that falls to his lot, and to take an interest in work is to begin to take an interest in life.

And where is this woman who has so fatally mistrusted herself and him?

Still toiling at her most ungracious task. She has grown sick of a governess's position, and is now a teacher in a National School. The children, buzzing over their lessons, regard her with respect, for she is gentle and yet firm with them, and possesses the one virtue which inevitably conquers young people—patience. How should she fail to possess that? Men and women can train themselves to endure, just as Mithridates could fortify himself against poison. And how could Marian better learn that stern repressive power of patience than by keeping herself, as she does, a prisoner in

a living tomb? One word she knows would bring that conscientious man to her side, to make her his wife, in despite of disfigurement and poverty, and the ravages which care, and want, and death-in-life have made. But fondly as she loves him, she chokes back the cry for pity and comfort, and is dead to him and the world. Only when she reads, as she does read at times, of "the Mr. Trefusis whose gun has been so favourably spoken of by French artillery officers of distinction during the Italian campaign," her eyes fill with tears, and a sigh—such a sigh as seems to confirm the old belief that when it is heaved a drop of the heart's blood escapes,—breaks from her in almost a groan, and desolation stares her more cruelly in the face.

Is it not strange how we—women especially—seem fated to torture ourselves for a mistake? Marian is making two people unutterably wretched when they ought both to be blest beyond all power of words, for they love each other; and if two people love each other—I wish there were some sacred word to express the real passion, love is so dragged through the mud of valentines and twopenny sentiment—when two people

love each other there is nothing in the further gift of Heaven or of man that can add to their happiness.

But if Marian's state is gloomy and wretched, there is at least for us who are lookers-on a hope that by-and-by the clouds will lift. Alas! over Alice's future they are gathering and thickening. The darkness deepens. Captain Cormack has served the devil too long and too well not to have his services recognised. His plans are laid with a fatal certainty. Poor Alice!

The darkness deepens. No hope of employment offers. She wearies herself out, and loses health and spirits in the weary search. The narrow field for female employment is narrowed in her case by the virtuous rectitude of Miss Delamere and the fatally officious friendship of Captain Cormack. If a chance seems to promise well for her, he creeps forward, exhibits a deep interest in her, and makes a mystery of the relation in which he stands to her; and then the door is closed against her.

The darkness deepens. Without any friends of her own sex, Alice feels very lonely and wretched. No wonder she does not sternly refuse the advances towards

friendship made by the French actress. When once that agreeable foreigner has established herself within the outworks, Alice's reserve is compelled to lay down arms. Who could resist her winning ways? And there really does not seem to be anything wrong in her. Before very long she has so won on Alice that the poor girl has told her all her troubles and anxieties. The French woman shrugs her shoulders, "*C'est affligeant! C'est pénible!* but a woman should not be afraid to escape from these troubles. A man may combat difficulties—but a woman! She is born to be petted and made much of, not to struggle with necessity!"

The darkness deepens indeed, for Alice does not see whither this gay, fatal French philosophy tends. She does not shrink away startled when Valerie speaks of Captain Cormack as her admirer, her lover. Of course I do not mean that she for one instant realises all that this means to the French woman, or that she knows what she is applauding when she is so charmed at Valérie's singing, "*Dans un grénier qu'on est bien à vingt ans!*" But the poison is at work.

Darker yet! Alice's stock of money is

exhausted, and though she still strives frantically, despairingly, to cling to hope, to clutch at employment, it is slipping away from her.

The little needlework she can obtain is a mere nothing to support her, and she is neither a rapid nor a neat workwoman. Then comes the time when she cannot pay her rent, when she dreads the sight of her landlady. After this comes the time when she no longer dreads to see her, for she is past all fear and hope. The landlady becomes importunate—rude—cruel. Finally she turns Alice out of doors, and detains her poor boxes in payment of rent.

The darkness is deeper still. For Captain Cormack knows all this—it is done at his instigation. To whom can this friendless, shelterless, penniless girl fly for aid or advice but to him?

She comes to him. And who but he is her best and only friend? He comforts her and assists her. He threatens to punish those who have dealt harshly with her. He draws tighter and tighter the fatal meshes of his net.

Starvation—rags—the workhouse—these

are staring her in the face. She is not beir tempted, she is being driven to her fate.

And now the darkness grows deep indee — so deep that I dare not attempt t pierce it.

Sleep in your quiet grave, George Carlyo slumber deep on your hard pallet, Maria and may Heaven in its mercy spare you dream of the evil days that have fallen upc your darling Alice!

The darkness has deepened indeed! It the utter darkness, one almost believes, whe shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE KEY OF THE MAJOR.

THE Honourable Mr. and Mrs. Vorian have voted Mayfair slow, and don't care particularly for Belgravia. They have selected a house in Kensington, where they will be near the Gardens—Kensington Gardens, and those other horticultural grounds which are being planned. Of course when I say "they," I mean Mrs. V. The Honourable Henry in these matters entirely defers to his wife.

One result of this move — perhaps an intentional result—is that their families do not trouble them much with their presence. The aristocratic nose is seldom followed in a westerly direction by its noble owner, nor does Mrs. Orr's pug turn up much in that neighbourhood. The young people have society of their own, so the old people say,

and the connection is kept up by letter chiefly. And the letters flow in this wise. Lady L. writes to dear Honoria, to tell her that so-and-so might be done with great effect at Beaudechet; and then Honoria writes to dear papa, with all sorts of love to dear mamma, and a request for "just a wee more money to invest in the estates." Then dear papa writes back, enclosing a cheque; and then dear Honoria hands it on to dear Lady L.; and so the dear transaction comes to an end.

I must admit that this correspondence occurs frequently. Whenever the Lacquoignes are a little pressed—and when are they not?—her ladyship never fails to bethink her of some marvellous improvement of which the property is susceptible One can scarcely be surprised that in time dear papa begins to get a little tired of the process of drawing cheques, and writes to Honoria that it is out of his power to oblige her just now, as he has had some severe losses by the collapse of the great American house, Bowhay, Scalpham, and Blaise.

This is very annoying to Honoria. It does not so much matter that she can't get the money immediately for the Beaudechet

repairs; but the fact is she had added a little margin for another purpose more immediate. Beaudechet can wait, but Major Cantlow can't.

"And who is Major Cantlow?" I hear some of my readers inquire. Major Cantlow has sprung up in the interval which I spoke of in the last chapter. A more charming man in society you never met, and he is such a crack shot with the rifle; and as for billiards, why Roberts can't give him more than ten, for there never was such a steady hand at a hazard. The Major is so popular with the ladies especially, that, as a natural consequence, the men hate him, and say ugly things about him. "Oh, that fellow Cantlow! Why the doose did he leave the Indian army, eh?" they ask—not of the Major directly though, for it is supposed he is quite capable of winging a man at fifty paces. But the story goes that Major C. was recommended to resign in consequence of some queer complications about the treasury chest discovered after he had been Acting Paymaster for a few months. The Major attached himself to the Vorians, or rather to Mrs. V., soon after their marriage. He had never taken much notice of Miss Honoria

Orr, but he was devotedly attentive to the Honourable Mrs. Vorian.

"Oh, no! doose a bit," said the Major to himself as he sipped his liqueur—he was waiting to take Mrs. V. to the Opera—"doose a bit, Canty, my boy! The old card was not such a flat as to let you marry his daughter—catch him at it; time thrown away to try it on. But I rather guess, my friend, that when two people marry and don't care a dump for each other, you may cut in and turn the wife into very remunerative property—eh, old chap?" And the Major winked, an operation which it required some ingenuity on his part to make unmistakably evident. For the Major's eyes were small and gray and deep-set, and they were rather near together and close up under his eyebrows, so that their normal appearance had much of the character of a wink. For the rest, he was rather handsome, with an aquiline nose coming down over a long drooping moustache, very little tinged with gray; a smiling mouth, but not a kindly one; and a complexion whose only fault was a tendency to exchange its usual pallor for an inflammatory flush, probably produced by hanging over the billiard table.

His attention was very acceptable to Honoria. She had never been accustomed to be studied as he studied her, and, in comparison with her husband's neglect, his respectful devotion "stuck fiery out indeed." You must remember that, though she did not love her husband, she was pained and disappointed by his neglect of her. It was a natural womanly feeling on her part. And then, again, she had never been admired by any one in all her life; and the Major was always paying her delicate compliments about her looks, so cleverly and artfully worded that there seemed no extravagance in them.

The Major was just at that convenient age when a man calls himself old or young just as it suits his purpose. Thus, he declared there was no impropriety in an old fellow like him taking care of Mrs. Vorian and beauing her about, but yet assumed the gaiety and ease of a young man in his gallantry towards her. He talked about feeling like a father towards her to other people, but he spoke to her of having a brotherly regard for her. And this brotherly regard went so far that he was even induced to tell her all his troubles. Poor fellow! an iniquitous

brother, who forged to a ruinous extent, and fled from the result of his crime, had imposed on him the task of shielding the family name from dishonour, and compelled him to accept that guilty brother's liabilities. Strictly speaking, the Major had never had a brother.

Honoria had felt great difficulty in offering to aid this noble victim of fraternal ingratitude. At first she used to send him bank-notes anonymously, but this system the Major found to be liable to objection.

"Confound it, one has to wait a post or two, and, after all, they might be lost; and one's so doosid pressed so often unexpectedly that it's important to handle the coin with promptitude," mused the Major over his frugal breakfast—a cup of coffee and an egg. So, as soon as he had finished his meal, he set his face westward, and paid a call on Mrs. Vorian.

As soon as the groom of the chambers had closed the door, the Major, who, after the usual greetings, had paused on the hearth-rug, with an elbow on the mantelpiece, stepped towards his hostess again, and took her by the hand once more.

"Generous creature! it is impossible for

me not to guess who so nobly assists a poor struggling but honest old soldier."

Honoria stammered out something about not understanding his meaning.

"No! I cannot allow you, my kindest of benefactresses, to feign ignorance, and deprive me of the pleasure of expressing my gratitude for such noble conduct—which I appreciate too highly and too deeply value its sincerity and delicacy to pain you by attempting to refuse—by mistaking the—pardon me, my dear Mrs. Vorian, words are too weak to express my feelings!"

Mrs. Vorian pressed the Major's hand warmly, and with some confusion begged him to think of the matter no more. She was only too charmed to be able to turn her pocket-money, which was lying idle, to such good purpose.

The Major once more overwhelmed her with protestations of gratitude, and contrived to arrange matters so cleverly and conveniently that from that hour he had no more difficulty about getting a pecuniary lift direct from his benefactress, without the aid and uncertainty of the post.

These two people have a secret now; and a secret between a man and his friend's wife

is an ugly bit of machinery that the devil can turn and twist to his purpose without much difficulty. If I had been Henry Vorian, I should not have liked to see what intimate friends my wife and the Major were. But Henry Vorian did not care.

"What's the odds?" he said to some officious, well-intentioned friend; "what's the odds? Cantlow is a deuced sight too wise to fall in love with Mrs. V., and she's old enough to take care of herself. Cantlow likes a good dinner and a good glass of wine; and if he lets himself out, like the greengrocer round the corner, to attend on my wife at the opera and elsewhere for his victuals, I've no objection. He saves me a good deal of bother, for if she hadn't got some one else to trot her out, I should have to do it; and, hang it, a fellow's club and weed and hand at whist is worth all the operas that were ever howled. Law bless you, I'm quite happy. He has too good taste. Hang it, a chap who's got Fanny Selwood, of the T. R. Blank, dying for him, isn't such a flat as to fall in love with my wife. As for her, I've the fullest confidence in her good sense."

With that the Honourable Henry sorts his

cards, and goes on with his game quietly. He was a good hand at whist, but at other games the Major was more than his match, rely upon it.

Between Henry Vorian and his wife there is no longer even the pretence of regard or affection kept up. They have one child, but what should have drawn them together, failed to do so. Honoria was far too fashionable a person to be a mother to her own child. The future Lord Lacquoigne was indebted for all maternal offices to Mary Jones, who left her own poor babe in the country to be brought up by hand to man's estate—and deformity.

The Honourable Henry Vorian had been so fond of his little brothers and sisters, that he quite expected to be fond of his own child. But his son and heir, thanks to the unnatural circumstances of his rearing, was a cross and fretful child, and made discontented faces so very like his mother's, that Henry Vorian sent him back to the nursery, and never asked for him again.

As a rule, the only meal the Vorians take together is breakfast. It is certainly the only meal they take together alone. At that cheerful repast Henry reads the paper inces-

santly; while Honoria, after skimming the births, deaths, and marriages, takes up her novel.

"When shall you return?" she asks, scarcely looking up from her book, as Henry rises from table.

"Well, I really cannot say. But as it will not interfere with any arrangements of yours, it is of no consequence."

"Oh, pray do not suppose I wish to know anything about your movements."

"Of course not; they are quite indifferent to you."

"Fortunately, they are, for I learn so little of them that they would be a perpetual source of anxiety."

"It's lucky you have sense enough to see the advantage."

"You have every right to be surprised to discover I possess any sense. I married you!"

"Or I you? But we won't quarrel about terms."

"Oh, dear no; we so seldom quarrel, it would be a pity."

And Mrs. Vorian was unintentionally right in saying this. They did *not* quarrel. A quarrel presupposes amicable relations, and

implies the possibility of reconciliation; and between the Vorians the first had never existed, and the second was out of the question therefore. They began by utter indifference, which gave place, as they began to pull different ways in the couples, to weariness and dislike. They spoke bitterly to each other, not because they wanted to have a storm to clear the matrimonial atmosphere, but because they disliked each other intensely in a passive sort of way. It was not strong enough for hate, but it was some way removed from indifference.

But there was a listless, purposeless character about the bitter *badinage* of this couple that was ill-omened. A good tiff, or even a continued spiteful cross-fire, between two married people, though not exactly necessary, is by no manner of means indicative of want of affection. In fact, love in a cottage may come to be so like a dream of happiness that Corydon and Phyllis have to pinch or slap one another in order to become assured they are awake.

When Henry Vorian and his wife have finished their fusilade, without much damage done on either side, the former strolls off to his club, or to Lord's, or some other haunt

of idle swells. His wife writes her letters, and then puts on a fascinating morning gown, and reclines in state in her boudoir.

And she has not been there long before a familiar knock at the door tells her that the Major has arrived. How full of animation and information he is, yet how tenderly attentive to her slightest word, or look, or wish. She sits a little queen on her low couch, making pretence to work some frivolous fancy thing or other, and he hovers about ready to hand anything she needs, to wind her silks, or to advise on the colours.

He can tell her everything that is going on. She need never puzzle her head to think what to do to kill time. The Major kills him for her the day before, cooks him, and serves him up with a tempting *carte*. First of all, there's a flower show, or a fancy bazaar, and then there's a picture gallery or a concert, and then there's the Park; and by-and-by "Lucia" at the Opera House, or some capital piece at one of the theatres. There never was such a *chef* as the Major, and there never were *menus* like his—he served up time in so many different distracting forms, and with such infinite variety.

They were most fascinating and charming,

these morning chats, to Honoria. To the Major, if you insist on my being candid, I'm inclined to think they were a bore. But then the Major knew that every poor man must work for his living, and, after all, this kind of work was not very hard, and the profits were very fair. At any rate he never let Honoria suspect he was bored for one single instant. He used to mask yawns in smiles. He was a consummate actor. No amateur performance was held to be perfect without him; and he really was almost as good as a professional actor, which is not what amateurs generally are, despite the fulsome exaggerations of which some dramatic critics are tempted to be guilty—tempted by the miserable inducement of an admission into the society of swells, and an unlimited supply of champagne and cold chicken. But if Towdeater, of the *Court Chronicle*, had any spark of literary conscience left, it must have been some consolation to him, after belauding Miss Bowwouse and Captain Yelper for their miserable performance, to feel that there was no need to lie about Major Cantlow, who really could perform in one of Charles Mathews's pieces without making you miserable.

Oh, yes, Major Cantlow is a consummate actor!

He sits with Honoria all the morning, fascinating her with the flow of his brilliant conversation. Now he is sportive, and even humorous; but he knows the feminine nature too well to risk failure by expecting too great an appreciation of the comic. Now he is earnest—dropping his voice and drawing his chair nearer to Honoria as he tells her the latest news of that irrepressible brother. Now he is sympathetic—delicately referring to people who are not appreciated as they ought to be in quarters where such appreciation would be trebly valuable; and then, gliding into the mysterious and suggestive, he wanders off to speculations about predestined attachments and the mysterious affinity of souls. And then, having set Honoria sighing, he sighs too, for company, if only for the opportunity of passing off a very good yawn as a half-suppressed sigh.

But presently he rises to go, and takes a tender but most respectful leave. And when he has got out of sight of the house, he gives himself a stretch and a shake.

"Curse me if I think I'm getting half enough interest for my outlay. Making love

to an ugly and uninteresting woman ought to fetch more than I'm getting. I'm almost asleep. A weed and a game of pyramids may perhaps restore me. I'll try 'em."

You see we have found the key of the Major. He is a needy adventurer, so gifted by Nature with the arts and advantages necessary for his calling, that she is almost deserving of being coupled with him in the indictment.

The Major is a clever man undoubtedly; but the game he is playing is a dangerous one. Under certain conditions a slight touch with the hand—a mere passing pressure of the foot—will set an avalanche loose to swoop down into the valley; but you who set it moving cannot stop it when once it is off—and then woe betide you!

The key of the Major. Yes, you can open it with that if you please, and dash off a composition in fine style; but by the inevitable laws of harmony there are certain things which much follow. Whether you like it or no, you'll have to resolve some of your combinations, and then the finish of your concerted piece is to a great extent beyond your control.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PROSPECTS OF THE BAL.

THE old moors above Polvrehan are sorely changed now. The grandeur and desolation have vanished. Where the curlew used to pipe as he flitted, a fleck of brown, over the purple heather, there is the noise of hammers and the shriek of pulleys. Tall straddling timbers, like the wooden legs of departed giants, stand beside gloomy, yawning shafts, and chain cables keep up a constant rattle as they mount and plunge with their clattering iron cauldrons, or kebbles, as the miners call them. A long, unsightly mound, like a bit of railway embankment, shows how actively Wheal Cormack has been worked.

Every here and there about the moor you come upon a rapid, turbid little water-course. The water is warm, for it is pumped up from the hot centre of earth, from the lower levels, where the men work almost stripped; and that devious runnel, after

coursing about some time, makes its way to a large water-wheel that stands solitary and untended some distance from the mine. That wheel is worked by the infantine Rella, and in its turn works the pumps that drain the mine. At this point the runnel empties its polluted stream into Rella; and from the first day that Rella was darkened by that water, her once limpid wave has been clouded, and the flashing trout are gone—even the vegetation along the banks is poisoned by the mineral water.

The moor is dotted with little cottages now, and there is a chapel called Elim, and a public-house called "New-found-out," which is, I surmise, the Cornish for "Newly-founded Inn;" and there are a few shops, and a butcher visits it twice a week; for Wheal Cormack is a fine speculation, and employs a good many hands, and the moor has become the temporary camping ground of a large mining population. I say temporary camping ground advisedly, for the mining population is a shifting and nomadic race. Here and there you come upon deserted mines, with dismantled engine-houses, that have such a vacant staring look about them that you can

almost fancy they are conscious of their ruin; and round these desolate mementos of unfortunate speculation and mad folly there will be found the remains of the once populous village—decaying cottages, with overrun gardens and rotting roofs.

This blight may fall on Wheal Cormack by-and-by; but at present all is prosperity. The miners—a strange race of men, utterly distinct from their compatriots the farm labourers — have established themselves there in force, and alternately labour and enjoy themselves according to their peculiar manners and customs. They go to Elim to hear the rantings of some very worthy and very ignorant tub-thumper, or, wearying of him, get up a revival, and raise hysterics and epilepsy to the temporary position of religious exercises. At other times they betake themselves to "New-found-out," where they bemuse themselves with bad cider or worse spirits, until it occurs to them to blow out the lights and have a free fight in the dark, when they slap and scratch one another in a lively but not very effectual manner. Sometimes, it is true, a knife may be drawn, but, then, a fist is never by any chance clenched; and I would here submit

to those who have a greater horror perhaps of prize-fights than I have, never having seen one, that it is a curious fact, and one which none of us can quite dismiss as he would like, that in this part of England, where boxing is comparatively unknown, stabbing is far more common than it should be. I don't attempt to argue or deduce, but I can't help stating the fact.

The other amusements of the inhabitants of this pleasant village may be summed up briefly. They poached a little, and occasionally robbed a hen-roost, and they kept pigs on almost Hibernian terms of familiarity with the family; and they bred ugly dogs and fought them, as they occasionally did cocks.

But yet they were intelligent — most intelligent as a rule—and could many of them sketch you a rough diagram of any of the mining machinery with a board and a lump of chalk; and they were industrious, working very hard in their hours of labour, though the system of working in corps gave them a good deal of time between each period of work.

The female inhabitants of the village were almost as peculiar a class as the men. They

wore a dress that was as characteristic as a foreign costume. Sun-bonnets, perked up like Norman caps, petticoats reaching only half way down the calf, and thick lace-up boots. Their figures were robust but shapely—their shoulders broad and well set, and their legs would have made a London footman burst with envy. Their hands and feet, I confess, were large, and their faces, as a rule, plain, if not coarse. As a body, the Bal-maidens were, if rough and even masculine in bearing, well conducted and virtuously minded.

As wives and mothers they did not shine, it must be allowed; but girls who were sent to mine as soon as they were big enough to earn wages for carrying ore, or breaking it up so as to facilitate the extraction of the metal, could hardly be expected to know very much about household affairs.

Such was the appearance of the moors behind Polvrehan, and such were the inhabitants who succeeded the rabbits and curlews, when Wheal Cormack was put to work, and the lode was cut in "the forty," as the highest level was called.

"Well, cap'n, what news?" asked Cormack, as he rode up to the door of the agent's house on his pony.

"Oh, bra'ave, Cap'n Cormack, bra'ave, I reck'n," said Captain Tregenna, coming to the door; "it's cuttin' bewtiful in all the levels. We could raise a'most any quantity a day, on'y 'twouldn't be wise."

"Aye, just so, cap'n. And how's the new shaft going on?"

"Well, we'm getting on so va'st as we can, I reck'n; but the country's hard just there."

"Then we needn't put up the engine yet."

"We sha'ant want she just yet, I'm thinkin'; but I s'pose, cap'n, we'll have a denner when we set her to work."

"Aye, that we will!"

"I'm glad o' that, cap'n, for, you see, 'tesn't as if the Bal was sta'arted proper-like, if we don't have now't o' the sort. Besides, 'twill be the means of bringing some of 'em to you for a sett, may be, cap'n. You mind, there's other lodes about here, for sartin. I've a-seen the lights a-fleckerin' all about the ground here; ye doan't see that, I reck'n, where's no lode."

"I dare say it would set some of 'em longing to try their luck, cap'n, and I

shouldn't be sorry to see every acre of the moor paying me a royalty."

"Well, so soon as it is time to begin buildin' the engine-house and stack, I'll let you know, cap'n. You don't want to go underground to-day, I reck'n."

"No, cap'n, not to-day. Are you going?"

"Aw, I'd on'y just come to grass—on'y had time to shift myself afore you comed. Won't 'ee step in and have something to make use o'? I've a potato pasty here, and I can give 'ee a crem o' liquor, cap'n."

"Not now, thanke'e, cap'n; I lunched just before I came out."

Henry Cormack turned his horse and cantered off homeward. He was very elate. Everything he touched now seemed to prosper, and you can hardly be astonished if his success hardened him a little. He thought he couldn't be so very wicked, after all, when he was so successful in all his undertakings.

The only drawback to his entire success was the foundry. He had injured it partly by his neglect, and partly by his false economy. In order to have other irons in the fire, he had robbed this business of

much of its sinew. The old *prestige* of the engines was being lost, and a new joint stock company further west was carrying off the custom.

"It's no use keeping an egg in hopes of hatching until it's too late to sell it as new-laid," said Henry Cormack to himself; "I'll make the new engine for the Bal, and then I'll sell the foundry."

With these words he turned in at the gate of Polvrehan.

Captain Tregenna, stimulated to fresh exertions by the thought of the great banquet to be given on the occasion of the putting to work of the engine at the new shaft, hurried on his men with a will, and before very long notified to Captain Cormack that it would be as well to begin building the engine-house and stack presently. So Henry Cormack gave the necessary orders, and had the preparations made at the foundry for casting the engine.

But he was a niggard in soul this man, and could not resist a bit of petty dishonesty. He saw his way to turning a fraudulent penny by the transaction. He found a man willing to build the engine-house and stack at an absurdly low price.

This, of course, meant that he would not build it properly; but what did that matter to Henry Cormack? He could charge the other adventurers a much heavier sum than the job had cost, and pocket the difference. He was really a delightful partner! For he not only did this shrewd stroke of business in the building line, but he meant to clear something very handsome on the engine. He could make something that would answer his purpose very well at much less cost than the sum the company had agreed to pay him for it.

The truth is that all he did now was for a specific purpose. He had realised large sums of money, and he began to think of retiring from active business. The foundry he had already made up his mind to sell. He would raise the apparent value of his Polvrehan property as much as possible by starting as many mines on it as he could find adventurers to undertake, and then he would sell the estate, and go and live somewhere nearer London.

This man had an uneasy conscience, one would almost fancy from this. We know be ought to have had one, and that Polvrehan, at all events, should have been

too full of reminiscences of the Carlyons to be a pleasant residence for one who has been their evil genius. His had been a restless, feverish chase of riches. In his pursuit of them he had done many things he did not particularly care to remember, not because he had any remorse, but because he had a superstitious fear of possible consequences. But now he was becoming wealthy. There was no necessity to live any longer in that house. He could afford to sell his undertakings. He would go somewhere where he was not known, and start as a country gentleman.

How he looked forward to that time! What visions he formed of perfect peace and freedom from care! Why should he not? If the honest and industrious man finds a deep delight in dreams of retirement from his honourable labour, why should not the poor rogue rejoice at the thought of escape from anxious toils, that are haunted by a demon echo whispering, "You will be detected, and fail." Mr. Peabody, good benevolent man, was pleased, no doubt, to relinquish the cares of business; but what would not Bill Sykes, or Fagan, or even the Artful Dodger give to be able to

throw up his trade, and retire into private life?

In course of time, the foundry is advertised for sale. A few days after the first announcement, Captain Carlyon receives a letter from Mr. Totting, a lawyer in London, who informs him that a client of his is inclined to purchase the foundry, and inquires the price of it. The captain sends him the requisite information as to terms, and then Mr. Totting writes again; and so, after a brief correspondence, it is agreed that Mr. Totting's client is to have the foundry. Captain Cormack, however, cannot deliver up possession until a certain date, as he is engaged in finishing off several commissions, and more particularly is anxious to superintend the construction of an engine for Wheal Cormack, which is situated on his property. No objection is made to this arrangement on the part of Mr. Totting's client, and the transfer is settled. And then Henry Cormack learns that the purchaser is Mr. James Trefusis, the inventor of the gun so highly spoken of by the French papers and scientific men. He also learns that Mr. Trefusis was a *protégé* of his late partner, Mr. George

Carlyon, which latter discovery makes him unaccountably uneasy. He seems to have an instinctive dread of James, and he makes up his mind to keep out of his way.

What has induced James Trefusis to buy the foundry? It is not easy to say. It was an impulse at first, perhaps, for directly he saw it advertised for sale in the papers, he was seized with a desire to purchase it. But the impulse was strengthened by reflection. He had nothing to live for now, he felt. The great object of his life was accomplished, but its purpose was defeated. He had made himself riches, but the woman who was to have shared them was gone—was virtually dead. So he determined to quit the busy world of London, and go back to the quiet little village where the earliest and happiest years of his life had passed. There he could people the dear old scenes with recollections of the past, and dream away his life. It was the instinct of the wounded wild creature which returns to die on the spot whence it started.

Meanwhile, the workmen are busy at Wheal Cormack. The tall chimney-stack is rising rapidly—too rapidly, perhaps, to be soundly built. Captain Tregenna does not

complain, however, for he is looking forward anxiously to the great dinner when he will be made such a lion of, and when the mine will be inaugurated in a strictly proper manner.

We must make a point of not missing that banquet. We will see the feast, and we will also be present at that interesting ceremony, the first setting-to-work of the engine.

CHAPTER XX.

A DAY IN EPPING FOREST.

IT is a lovely day, just at the beginning of autumn—the very beginning, before you become conscious that the gold and russet which the woods are putting on are the harbingers of decay—before the evenings have grown too short, and while as yet the flowers have not made way for the fruits entirely, though the orchards are bright with red and gold-streaked apples, and the yellow corn is rustling in the breeze that skims the opening fields. And then the hazels are thick with nuts, which is excellent news for the school children, who are going to spend their annual holiday in Epping Forest.

Marian is up with the lark this morning—really up with the lark, for, as she puts on her bonnet and shawl, the lark in the cage outside the chair-mender's window next door takes his head from under his wing, and

seeing that the sun has already wakened a twinkle in the twilight sky, begins to sing of the delights of dewy fields, and knock his head against the roof of his prison in the vain desire to soar.

Marian lifts the blind and peeps out. There is no threatening of rain. She is very glad to see that. One would almost fancy that she is looking forward to the day's pleasure on her own account; but she is not. "Teacher"—as the little people over whom she presides are wont to call her—is a quiet and cheerful person, who does her duty and loves to see her small charges happy and well behaved. She finds her chief comfort and consolation in their society, and enters into all their hopes and wishes. It is on their account, not her own, that Marian Carlyon casts an anxious look at the sky as she rises.

As she looks at the heavens, and strives to read the signs of the weather, does she discern nothing that should mark the day for her as an important one?

She only sees the gold spreading abroad, mingling with the gray, and holding forth promise of serenity and sunlight. Nothing more than this!

How early all the little ones are stirring!

Short, fat, thumby fingers are knuckling sleep out of numerous eyelids or ere the chairmender's lark has uttered his first chirp. There is much polishing of morning faces and a vigorous brushing of hair and scrubbing of small paws. Breakfast may be quoted as having a downward tendency, for it is being swallowed in haste even by those stolid, solid young people, whom the immediate prospect of a day's pleasuring cannot always prevail upon to forego their natural sustenance.

Best clothes are fished out of drawers where they have lain so long that a twelve hours' holiday does not quite obliterate the creases they have acquired during their retirement. Juvenile boots are for once polished to a dazzling lustre, and there is a marvellous display of clean linen in the form of shirt fronts, collars, and cuffs.

At an early hour in the morning, Mr. Sprowt, the greengrocer in Gray's Inn Road, is busily engaged in decorating the van which stands in his yard with evergreens and little flags. He christens that van "Industry"—a rather curious name for a pleasure van—and he lets it out on very reasonable terms to excursionists. I dare say Dobbin and Gaylad, the two horses in the stable adjoin-

ing the yard, hearing the whishing of evergreens and the breaking of branches, interpret these signs with great ease, and look at one another mournfully, as much as to say, "Oh, bother! here's another score of people to lug to Epping Forest and back!"

Early in the morning, too, rises the Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth, curate of St. Pacifica's, Clerkenwell. He shaves himself with great nicety, and puts on a clean white neckcloth. He is a young man, and he is not averse to the idea of being the cynosure of the little knot of young ladies who are going to Epping Forest with the school children. He is a very amiable person, with a very small stipend, so we cannot begrudge him this simple and inexpensive pleasure.

"Hooray! hooray!"

The young people are gathering outside the school-house, and their delight is so great that they must shout.

After they have been kicking their heels about outside the school for some time, peeping furtively in at the window to observe Teacher packing loaves, and buns, and oranges into a large hamper, the children see the van coming up the street.

"Hooray! hooray!"

The excitement caused by the arrival of the vehicle has hardly subsided ere the Rev. Augustus Rudgeworth heaves in sight.

"Hooray! hooray!"

Mr. Chawksly, the milkman, arrives with a large tin of milk, which is placed inside the van, being intended for tea.

"Hooray! hooray!"

The young ladies who are to look after the children, and who, in one or two instances, are attended by the blushing, but beautifully dressed youths, who are, it appears, to look after them, arrive by degrees.

"Hooray! hooray!"

The Vicar, who is old and gouty, hobbles down the street. He only comes to find fault with the arrangements, and he is very unpopular in the school. But on an occasion like this the desire to shout completely destroys any feeling of animosity, and the Vicar is received with applause.

"Hooray! hooray!"

Even the policeman who saunters up by-and-by derives a temporary popularity from the general desire to make a noise as a means of relief for pent-up good spirits. It

was only yesterday he impounded Jack O'Reilly's top, and barely a week since he confiscated Charley Snagg's hoop. He kicked Bill Marks two days ago, and punched Sam Wills on Wednesday. But to-day his misdeeds are condoned, and he receives an ovation.

"Hooray! hooray!"

The school-room door opens. It is Teacher!

"Hooray! hooray!"

No, it isn't Teacher; it is only the hamper with the bread and buns. Never mind, that deserves a cheer all the same.

"Hooray! hooray!"

Another hamper.

"Hooray! hooray!"

More hampers.

More "hoorays!"

The neighbourhood is becoming aware of the excitement. The barber comes to his door, and two gentlemen, who have done their intoxication early, in order to get the responsibility off their shoulders at once, stagger out of the "Cat and Compasses," at the corner opposite the school. One of them leans with a vacant smile against the post at

the edge of the pavement. The other, in attempting to do the same against an imaginary post near his friend's, suddenly finds his level, and is promptly picked up by the policeman.

"Hooray! hooray!"

I won't undertake to say whether this cheer is to be understood as encouraging the civil force in the repression of intoxication, or as applauding a clever bit of comic business, or merely as an outburst of animal spirits. In reality I don't think the children themselves could give a reason for the shout.

"Hooray!"

They are being told off to their places inside and outside the van.

"Hooray! hooray!"

They swarm into their seats with agility, and presently a man in top-boots, with a portentously red nose, who has arrived to take the reins out of the hands of the lad who brought the van round, climbs to his perch in front, and inspects the scene gravely from his elevation.

"Hooray! hooray!"

They're off at last.

"Hooray! hooray! hooray! hooray!"

So they are borne along with much shout-

ing and continuous waving of handkerchiefs. The clerk's son, who is a musician, and sings in the quire at St. Pacifica's, is seated on the box, regaling himself with airs upon the cornet, an instrument of which his knowledge is apparently limited, and which seems to have a tendency to burst out in the wrong place.

They arrive at the Forest without any further mishap than the knocking of some urchin's cap out of the van, or the bursting of an odd bottle or so of ginger beer among the cakes, which, however, only adds to the flavour, and prevents them from appearing too dry.

How these poor London-bred children enjoy this brief gasp of nature I have neither the time nor the power to describe to you. They climb trees for birds'-nests that have been empty since spring, and are disappointed at not finding eggs in them. They become acquainted for the first time in their lives perhaps with the urticating properties of the nettle, and the spinosity of the common furze bush. They tumble about, with an occasional bruise or rent, and enjoy themselves heartily. They eat their meal of cake and milk and water with infinite relish, and return to

their sports and pastimes with renewed vigour.

So the long, delightful day goes, and as the shadows begin to grow long, and when the hampers have run low, the children have wearied a little. Some of the smaller folk are sound asleep already, nestled around Teacher, who has tired herself out in her efforts to promote the happiness of her pupils.

Finally, there is a good deal of whipping-in required, and the Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth has to make casts to bring in stragglers; and all hands are employed in reloading the van.

And now the question arises—where is the driver?

That fatal nose of his, I should have told you, turned up] in disgust at the discovery that the school-feast caterers had provided no more potent stimulant than ginger beer. After expressing his disgust at "them there teetotalling humbugging ways," the charioteer had departed, as he said, for a pint of mild ale with a dash of spirit, promising to return before the hour fixed for leaving. From that moment until long after the time when they should have taken their homeward way he was not again visible.

A search was instituted, but to no purpose. Here was a pretty difficulty! The young ladies had not sufficient confidence in one another's driving, though each declared she was accustomed to handle the ribbons. They applied in a body to the Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth to mount the box, but he was compelled to own that he was totally unacquainted with the art of driving.

There seemed nothing for it but to camp out in the Forest; when, at the last moment, the red-nosed one came beating up the avenue like an unseaworthy boat tacking into port. His unsteadiness was a cause of much consternation and anxiety; but at last the necessity of having an intoxicated driver or none came to be recognised as insurmountable, and the ladies accordingly agreed to place themselves in the hands of the red-nosed one.

Not without some difficulty and a good deal of very forcible language, that gentleman contrived to harness Dobbin and Gaylad to the van, and, after a little ado, managed to mount his perch.

For some time he went on so steadily that by degrees the alarm subsided, and the whole party, having had rather a tiring day, fell to

nodding at one another all round, as if it were a general leave-taking.

But, alas! as ill luck would have it, in the Mile End Road the red-nosed driver fell in with an old acquaintance who was driving a return hearse from the funeral of an Irish gentleman, who had been buried in one of the cemeteries on the Flats. As the driver of the hearse, as well as the red-nosed van-man, had been indulging in strong waters, he was by no means disinclined to enter with spirit into a race with the latter worthy.

Now a trial of speed between a hearse and a pleasure-van is so unusual and curious a spectacle, that we can hardly feel any great surprise that the driver of the Romford 'bus, in his amusement at the scene, should neglect to pull in, so as to let the van go by.

There was a crash, a grinding sound, a scream and a volley of violent language from the red-nosed one; and then the Industry settled down at one corner rather suddenly, burying the Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth under a heavy layer of sleeping children and terrified young ladies.

The collision, which had carried off the front wheel, also knocked the driver from his box. As far as he was concerned, however,

the injuries were slight, being in fact confined to the bursting of a white hat and a cut across the left knee of a pair of kerseymeres. The damage to the van was irremediable.

There was nothing for it but to put the children into several cabs, and send them home; which the Reverend Augustus Rudgeworth did, despatching a young lady in charge of each vehicle.

Finding that there were enough to see the little people home, Marian was about to set off for her own residence, after bidding the curate good evening. She pushed her way through the crowd, which had of course gathered in an incredibly short space of time, to stare stolidly at the result of the accident, without offering any suggestions or apparently taking anything beyond the most superficial interest in it.

As she reached the outskirts of the mob, a hand was laid on her arm. She looked up in surprise.

"Now we have met again, Marian, we don't part easily."

It was James Trefusis!

Ah, what a throb of joy passed through that poor woman's heart as she felt herself

once more safe and near him! And what a load seemed removed from his soul!

But they neither of them made any demonstration. There were too many eyes watching.

He drew her arm into his, and led her away.

"I shall see you to your door," he said firmly.

"Oh, James, I don't deserve the happiness of seeing you again."

"How could you write that letter to me? Did you know me no better than that after all these years?"

"Oh, but I am so altered——"

"Not to me, darling. And if you had been ever so much changed, do you think it would have mattered to me, who prize you for your worth."

"Oh, don't say so, James—I don't deserve it; and that was why I doubted."

"You were hardly recovered from the illness, I think. But you won't fancy that again, will you?"

She looks in his face, and says "No!" confidently; and then, it being a retired lane that they have reached by this time, and gas-lamps being few and dim, he bends down, draws her to his heart, and kisses her.

"Oh, James, James, I never dared to hope I should know this happiness again!"

"And I had almost despaired. But I have you now, and you will never run away from me again, will you?"

"Never, James."

And then James tells her of his good fortune, and how he is shortly to be master of the old foundry, and is trying, if possible, to purchase the old house at Polvrehan.

They walk all the way to Marian's humble lodgings in Clerkenwell, but the walk seems far too short for all they have to say.

"Good night, my own darling—my wife!"

"Not yet, James, dear."

"No, but you will be so very soon, that I may call you so."

And so they separate after one long quiet embrace.

That night there was exquisite peace in those two hearts, and infinite gratitude and trust. The sad past was dead and buried, and the future was to be, oh, so bright!

END OF VOL. II.

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